

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD**

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**LABOUR'S TRANSFORMATION 1983 - 1989:  
A STUDY IN POLITICAL COMPLEXITY**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR  
THE DEGREE OF PhD.**

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# **ABSTRACT**

## **LABOUR'S TRANSFORMATION 1983-1989:**

### **A STUDY IN POLITICAL COMPLEXITY**

**ADAM LENT**

This thesis attempts to answer the following question: why and how did the Labour Party change between 1983 and 1989? This question is approached from the theoretical perspective of 'complexity' which suggests that socio-political phenomena are either too complex ever to be fully understood or are too complex for the methodological tools we presently have at our disposal. These theoretical conclusions are arrived at following detailed analysis of how the dominant model of causality employed in social and political analysis has tended to obscure a large quantity of causal processes involved in the development of any one social or political factor. As such, it is proposed that a methodology be employed which aims to subvert the prevalent tendency to simplification whilst simultaneously using the insights of complexity to develop a new approach to the Party. A variety of methodological approaches are proposed and applied in pursuit of these goals.

Following the identification of simplifications and potential sources of further complexity in existing analyses of Labour's transformation between 1983 and 1989, the thesis makes a large number of empirical observations about the nature of that transformation. These empirical observations cannot be easily summarised

in the form of a limited number of over-arching findings for the reason that such simplification is avoided within the thesis itself. However, it can be stated that these observations cover the full range of personal, contingent political, institutional, ideological and rational factors which were causes, aspects and effects of the transformation.

## A NOTE ON REFERENCES

The following sources are cited using the Harvard system of referencing: books, contributions to edited collections, pamphlets, journal articles, feature articles in newspapers and periodicals, published reports and official documents, and unpublished discussion papers and proposals which are clearly marked as authored by an individual, a committee or an organisation.

New reports and editorials in newspapers and periodicals are cited in brackets within the body of the text, the title and date of the newspaper being given. Minutes of bodies such as executive committees, and unpublished reports of those bodies that have no clear author are cited in brackets within the body of the text, with title, date and any serial or archive number being given where available.

Original interviews carried out by the author are cited using the Harvard system. However, it has also been made clear within the body of the text that the reference is to an original interview. The vast majority of original interview material used in this thesis was conducted 'on the record' and as such most interview references contain the name of the interviewee. However, the whole of one interview and parts of a small number of others were conducted 'off the record' at the request of the interviewees - in these few cases reference is made only by a broad description of the interviewee's position in the Labour Party such as 'party activist' or 'party official'.



## 1

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## INTRODUCTION

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The basic premise of this thesis is that politics is highly complex. The simplicity of this premise, however, is deceptive. As analysts we often have a strong sense of the complexity of the subject we study but to argue explicitly for that sense (i.e. to turn that sense into concepts and categories) is difficult. Furthermore, once one acknowledges openly the complexity of politics, one cannot avoid the troublesome question of whether politics is in fact *too* complex to be fully understood. Troublesome because if, as in the case of this thesis, one answers with a tentative “yes”, an ambiguity still remains about whether politics will *always* be too complex or whether it is merely too complex for the methodological tools we use at present.

In dealing with this topic, the following pages can conveniently be perceived as operating on three levels. The first is that of the pure theory of complexity. Chapter two and chapter three concern themselves mainly with this issue. It is argued in chapter two that a brief study of the predominant notions about cause and effect in political analysis indicate that we employ a paradigm of linear causality. This paradigm conceals the actual complexity of causal processes for the sake of being able to exert power over our environment and actions. Chapter three displays more specifically how such simplification has permeated one particular area of

political study - the transformation of the Labour Party in the 1980s. In response to this, the chapter goes on to present alternative methods for the analysis of this particular area of study which take more account of complexity. However, it is acknowledged here that a fully complex understanding cannot be achieved in this study either because the analytical methods demanded by the structure of a thesis are inadequate to the task or because complexity, by virtue of its extent, can never be fully understood. As such, the chapter presents methods of analysis which while they may enhance complexity to a small degree, have their main utility in the fact that they communicate a sense of an evaded complexity and thus subvert existing tendencies towards simplification. In this context, this thesis can be seen as a tactical response to the dominance of simplification on behalf of complexity.

The second level is that of the theoretical approach to the Labour Party adapted in the light of the methodological imperatives created by an appreciation of complexity. This mainly centres on the use of non-doctrinal beliefs in the Party. Drucker's work (1979) on such non-doctrinal beliefs in the form of ethos is well-known and esteemed and yet it has made very little impact on the way the Party has been analysed. Despite his criticism that studies of Labour have seriously over-emphasised doctrine, it has been the transformation of paper policy which has most interested analysts of Labour in the 1980s. However, this thesis asserts that while Drucker had his own valid reasons for espousing the non-doctrinal beliefs as an analytical category, it also serves the analyst well as an enhancer of complexity and a subverter of simplification. This is primarily because its very vagueness as a concept and the ethereal nature of the broad phenomena to which it refers effectively provide that sense of an evaded complexity which this thesis is trying to create. In this context the analysis shifts its focus from Drucker's concept of ethos to a broader notion of '*values*'.

In addition to the employment of non-doctrinal beliefs, the thesis also attempts to multiply the categories traditionally employed to understand Labour. This is designed to display the simplification inherent in much analysis and to augment the number of causes and effects we can involve in our understanding of the Party. In particular, this method is employed in relation to the traditional left-right spectrum. It is argued that this spectrum fails to communicate the large number of other dichotomies of opinion not congruent with the left-right distinction but which still played a major role in the Party's transformation.

This adapted theory of the Labour Party, centring largely on *values* and multiplication, is introduced in chapter two but developed throughout the thesis.

The third and final level is that of the empirical study of the Party's transformation itself. The empirical study, aptly for a thesis that rejects linear causality, is both a cause and an effect of the theoretical considerations asserted in chapters two and three and applied throughout. It is a cause in the sense that in attempting to answer the central empirical research question of the thesis - why and how did the Labour Party change between 1983 and 1989<sup>1</sup>? - I found myself confronted by an overwhelming quantity of causes, effects and interactions to which I felt I was doing violence through an apparently necessary process of simplification. It was this confrontation which maybe is normally suppressed by analysts but which ultimately I was unable to ignore. However, the empirical research is also an effect of the theoretical

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<sup>1</sup> 1983 is chosen as a starting-point being the year in which Michael Foot resigned and Neil Kinnock took over as leader. While 1989 is chosen as an end-point being the year in which the Policy Review was accepted by the Labour Party Annual Conference. These seem adequate parentheses for an era of transformation. However, as the thesis points out, while such chronological limits are demanded by the structure of a thesis and most forms of existing analysis, they are themselves processes of simplification. A fully complex analysis, if such a thing could exist, would not admit of start-points or end-points.

considerations, in that only by exploring this sense of complexity further could I develop the methods necessary to highlight that complexity and communicate it in an effective if somewhat initially unexpected 'tactical' fashion.

Within this context, the empirical findings of this thesis uphold the theoretical assertions but also, with the help of that theoretical approach, are of interest in themselves. However, it is traditional in empirical studies for an author to ultimately identify a prime set of causes or processes (often maybe only one cause or process) which allows us to 'understand' the subject under study. However, this thesis represents a radical rejection of such epiphenomenal explanations. There is no identification of one cause or process or even one significant point of transformation. The very singularity of the notion of transformation is itself questioned. The empirical findings stand on their own indicating nothing but themselves. By doing this they merely augment - rather than negate - causes and effects discovered by other analysts and as such, by adding to the quantity of such causes and effects, enhance our appreciation of the complexity of the transformation. This, of course, makes for a less immediately satisfying empirical analysis. Literary critics may say that it lacks the 'closure' associated with a traditional novel. But like contemporary novels which avoid closure, the same lack here hopefully also says something interesting and unacknowledged about the world. Namely that complexity denies us a satisfyingly complete picture within the structure of one thesis.

The empirical study begins in chapter four. This chapter deals with the contest for leader after Michael Foot's announcement of resignation and the very earliest days of Kinnock's leadership prior to the outbreak of the national miners' strike in March 1984. This brief period, which is almost totally ignored by analysts of the Party in the 1980s, is identified as an important focus for analysis. Study of these early days indicates that desire for major reform

on the part of a 'core leadership' was much greater from much earlier than previously acknowledged, that various changes in the *values* of the Party had already begun, and that reforms of structure and policy were underway from the very first day of Kinnock's leadership. The identification of these earlier causes, effects and aspects of the transformation is itself an enhancer of complexity.

Chapter five also displays the existence of earlier factors of change. The chapter concentrates upon the troubled disputes that dominated the Party in 1984 and 1985: the Miners' Strike, the rates rebellion and the Militant debacle. Rejecting the common view that this was a 'wasted year' which distracted the leadership from its reform project, it is argued that great changes in *values*, structure, identity and factional relations occurred without which further aspects of the transformation would have been extremely unlikely. The chapter also argues that the cathartic and sudden shift of 'realignment' usually identified as the culmination of this period was in fact the result of far more diverse, long-term and, of course, complex features.

Chapter six concentrates on the changes brought about in Party structures and organisation. Once again rejecting the mono-causal explanation which emphasises conscious plans for such reorganisation on the part of the core leadership, the chapter argues that these changes were the result of a complex confluence of causal processes including ad hoc responses to specific events, the personality of the Party leader, contingent political circumstances, the less tangible effects of other developments *and* conscious decision-making by the core leadership themselves.

Chapter seven focuses on the growth and influence of new agenda issues in the Labour Party during the 1980s paying particular attention to the disputes over black sections and the radical

policies of Labour local authorities. Once again, areas that have been barely explored by existing analyses. It is argued that these new agenda disputes, while not having any major effect on the doctrine of the Party by 1989, by their very existence indicate a major aspect of transformation. It is shown how these new agenda issues and style of politics constituted *values* which could not and would not be accommodated by the *values* of the core leadership or more surprisingly by the doyens of the soft left despite their initial enthusiasm for the new agenda issues developed since the 1960s. Furthermore, the disputes over these issues and the growth in their significance indicate a decline in the importance of the traditional left-right split based as it was upon distinct ideological positions. For example, the emphasis on ethnicity, which was the key feature of the black sections dispute, began to supplant these more established dichotomies. This inevitably provides an indication of greater complexity based upon the multiplication mentioned above.

The election defeat of 1987 and its aftermath is explored in chapter eight. A simple empirical study of this period highlights the fact that the factional alliance, usually identified as being the key to Kinnock's success in transforming the Party, was more complex and unsettled than is presently accepted. The events of this period are also a case study in the complexity of causal processes in that the traumatic and overwhelming defeat in the 1987 election lead unexpectedly to the strengthening of the leader and his approach due to the 'intervention' of non-linear causal processes.

And finally, chapter nine focuses upon the area most studied by other analysts: policy reform. However, rather than treat policy reform as the outstanding effect of other factors (as in the accepted epiphenomenal analyses), it explores such reform as merely one other factor in a wider transformation which itself acted as a cause as well as an effect. In particular, it is

shown how policy was not based solely on rational calculations by the core leadership but was transformed by, and itself transformed, the *values* of the Party. Study of policy reform, especially the Policy Review, once again multiplies categories by showing how disputes within the reform-supporting Party establishment were not rare and how, by 1989, opposition to the policy preferences of the core leadership were localised more usually within that establishment rather than the broader Party. This development - illustrated strongly by the lack of popular opposition to the Review - displays how significant transformation must have already occurred outside the realms of policy thus multiplying the number of identified causes of change and challenging epiphenomenal approaches. Both factors which contribute to the construction of a complex approach.

Before starting the thesis proper, it is worthwhile presenting a very brief survey of developments in the Labour Party in the fifteen years before 1983 to provide a historical context for the transformation that was to come. This survey may also in itself serve the cause of complexity by displaying, however briefly, that even more causes of the changes in the 1980s can be found earlier in the Party's history.

The great popularity of Harold Wilson's first government which swept him to a second term in 1966 soon evaporated in the turmoil of the sterling crisis, growing unemployment and a backbench rebellion over the In Place of Strife legislation which aimed to legally limit trade union powers (Pimlott 1992: 404-431; 510-546). However, the consequent victory of the Conservative Party under Heath in 1970 led to the passing of far more draconian union legislation but did little to quell the worsening economic situation. In this context a period of

union militancy began leading to a u-turn by Heath on his monetarist policies, the failure of his attempts to curb union power and ultimately an election in February 1974 (Gamble 1974: 220-228).

Wilson returned to office although at the head of a minority government. He called another election in October to remedy this situation but only succeeded in winning a majority of three (Laybourn 1988: 164). Despite having produced a radical programme in 1973 (The Labour Party 1973), such a precarious hold on power meant the Government had to embark on a period of ad hoc economic management based around tripartite collaboration with business interests and the unions (Warde 1982: 125-162; Pimlott 1992: 617-618). In addition, Wilson's Government had to endure a series of scandals (Pimlott 1992: 625-632). Following Wilson's sudden resignation in 1976, the Government, under Jim Callaghan's premiership shifted towards a "quasi-monetarist" policy designed to bring inflation under control, cut the PSBR and secure an IMF loan (Whiteley 1983: 151-154). The ensuing incomes policy coupled with cuts in the public sector led to a resurgence of union militancy over the winter of 1978/1979 (Shaw 1994: 7). Having lost a vote of confidence in Parliament, when the pact which had kept his Government afloat since 1977 collapsed, Callaghan called an election which he lost to Margaret Thatcher.

It was in this historical context that the Labour left reached its highest level of influence within the Party spurred on by union militancy and the intellectual and political bankruptcy of the revisionists and pragmatists who had led the Party since the 1950s and formed the troubled Governments of Wilson and Callaghan. In addition the growth of student radicalism, new agenda issues and the general rebellious sense of the times provided the Labour left with a level of grassroots support it did not have before (Seyd 1987: 37-75; Shaw 1994: 20). On this



basis, the left gained a tentative control on the NEC in 1973 and were able to elect Tony Benn to the chairmanship of the Home Policy Committee and Ian Mikardo to the chairmanship of the International Affairs Committee (Seyd 1987: 101).

This optimistic and growing left coalesced around the Alternative Economic Strategy which advocated an extension of public ownership, increased public expenditure, and the imposition of import controls which would of necessity lead to withdrawal from the EEC (Seyd 1987: 25-31; Shaw 1994: 7-15). There was also growing support for unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from NATO. New agenda issues of anti-racism and feminism also began to influence the left's thinking (Interviews with the following: Haworth 1995; Hulme 1994; Stanley 1994).

A further issue, which was to be of particular importance in the 1980s, was the left's developing commitment to direct action as an effective way to challenge the power of a capitalist ruling class. The success of the unions in defeating Heath's right-wing legislation inspired a belief in the need to break unjust laws and call strikes for political ends (Seyd 1987: 33-35).

The left also aimed to counter the institutional and conservative power of the state by winning changes to the Party's constitution which would make MPs and Party leaders more accountable to the grassroots (Interview with Stanley 1994). To achieve this, left groups - such as the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee - campaigned for mandatory reselection of MPs by their constituency parties once every Parliament, the establishment of a Party-wide electoral college to elect the leader and deputy

leader, and the right of the NEC to write the election manifesto (Seyd 1987: 33-35; 103-124; Shaw 1994: 21-22).

The greatest victories for the resurgent left came between 1979 and 1981 when the 1979 annual conference accepted mandatory reselection, the 1981 special conference established the electoral college, and the 1981 annual conference adopted a unilateralist defence policy (Seyd 1987: 103-124). In addition, a left-leaning group was elected to victory on the powerful Greater London Council in 1981 (Seyd 1987: 142).

A less clear-cut victory for the left was the election of Michael Foot as leader in 1980. Although Foot had always been a member of the left, in government he had given strong support to Callaghan - as such the direction in which he would take the Party was unclear. Nevertheless the conglomeration of these victories for the left encouraged four leading right-wingers to leave Labour, set-up the Social Democratic Party and take a number of MPs and members with them. A factor which was to split the anti-Tory vote in 1983 and 1987 to the great detriment of both the SDP and Labour.

However, to assert, as the SDP defectors did at the time, that the left now ran the Party would be a great exaggeration. Even at the height of its power, the left was subject to defeat. This was particularly the case when the proposal to allow the NEC to write the manifesto was voted down at the 1980 and 1981 conferences (Seyd 1987: 121-124) and when, in the first use of the electoral college, the staunch right-winger Denis Healey beat Tony Benn to the deputy leadership in 1981. The latter defeat was in part caused by the decision of some left-wingers to abstain on the second round vote rather than vote for Benn. One of those who did

so was Neil Kinnock, a move which meant he was viewed with great suspicion from that day on by the left (see chapter four).

Against this background of faction-fighting, Foot presided over a disastrous three years for the Party. Labour was racked by a severe financial crisis which led to cuts, job losses, the decline in funds for regional and local activities and a consequent loss of morale amongst the Party's employees and activists (Interview with Mortimer 1994; Interview with Warburton 1995). While the Militant tendency, with its apparently growing grassroots influence, trotskyite politics and entryist tactics caught the attention of the press and became a source of internal dispute (Seyd 1987: 161-166). A dispute to which Foot's responded with extreme uncertainty making him appear weak and indecisive.

This impression was consolidated when Foot initially opposed the selection of the left-wing candidate Peter Tatchell for a by-election in Bermondsey and then backed him in the face of NEC resistance (Seyd 1987: 46; Shaw 1994: 18-19; Wainwright 1987: 86-89). Further embarrassment came when the leader had to withdraw his appointment of Kinnock to the post of employment spokesperson after right-wingers in the Shadow Cabinet threatened to resign (Shaw 1994: 19). Caught between left and right in a demoralised and threatened Party, Foot was unable to achieve the unity he hoped for (Shaw 1994: 1-28).

However, the final humiliation came in the 1983 election. In the face of a Government buoyed enormously by the military victory in the Falklands and which had grasped the importance of a well-planned, emotive and disciplined election campaign, the Labour Party suffered enormous defeat surrendering a three-figure majority to Thatcher. Even more worrying was the fact that Labour only received 2% more of the vote than the SDP-Liberal Alliance (Shaw 1994: 26-

28). Of course, the existence of this new third Party made the struggle between the Conservative and Labour Parties that much more uneven.

The defeat was made even worse by the fact that Labour had run an appalling campaign with apparently no proper co-ordination and led by a man who could never compete with Thatcher for sheer television presence and simplicity of message.

Soon after, Foot announced his resignation and the long contest for the post of leader and deputy leader began.

Before continuing this historical study in considerably more detail, we must first turn to the theoretical considerations on the complexity of politics. However, it would serve the goal of greater complexity well, to keep this brief historical survey in mind throughout the thesis and question whether earlier causes of the transformation of the 1980s can be identified. This issue will be returned to in chapter ten which will attempt to identify the simplifications existing within the text of this thesis.

## **PART I**

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# **COMPLEXITY AND POLITICS**

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## **TOWARDS COMPLEXITY IN POLITICAL ANALYSIS**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

At some point in their study of a particular issue, socio-political analysts often experience the sense that their subject matter is too complex to be fully understood. The sheer quantity of causes and effects involved in that subject matter suddenly appears too great, too intense to be adequately communicated to a reader. However, analysts rarely, if ever, allow such disturbing thoughts to impinge for long upon their task. The implications of the notion that the political world is too complex to understand are so radical that they would, if followed through to their logical limit, negate the value of accepted methods and structures of political analysis.

This is so largely because the idea of a non-apprehendable complexity unites three subversions of three very fundamental assumptions without which the political analytical project could not operate as it does. These are the assumptions that: an event or phenomena has an identifiable and limited series of significant causes and effects; the analyst and the analysis can remain separate from the development and nature of the analysed; there is a political reality which can

be fully apprehended and understood <sup>2</sup>. As a result, our sense of complexity is consigned to the margins of our perception for the sake of completing an analytical task in the manner universally accepted by the academic community. And, as this chapter argues, that universally accepted manner is based upon and reproduces the goal of simplification.

Of course, not all social analysts have ignored these subversions. Most disciplines have well-established streams of thought which acknowledge the validity of one or more of these three subversions if not necessarily within the context of complexity. But the discipline of politics in Britain has been more resistant than probably any other social science to these ideas. This is not to say that all individual political analysts unquestioningly accept the existence of an absolute truth, the feasibility of total analytical objectivity, or the narrow limitations of causality but as a discipline there has been far less thought given to the methodological modifications that might be required when one does question these notions. For example, the application of reflexivity to the analyst which has become so common in sociology and anthropology (Steier 1991) is practically unknown in politics.

The powerful influence of these three assumptions remain within politics by virtue of an inertial commitment to the methods once associated with those assumptions. They almost certainly have their origin in the influence which classical scientific goals, methods and models once exerted over all social sciences. For example, the influential political theorist Michel Duverger held out a common hope for the future of political science when he wrote in the introduction to his work *Political Parties*:

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<sup>2</sup>Many thanks to Dr. Tim Jordan for pointing-out this significant implication of complexity.

In fifty years time perhaps it will be possible to describe the real working of political parties. For the time being we are in the age of 'cosmogonies'. Science judges them severely once it has arrived at maturity - without them, however, there would be no science, or at least it would take longer to develop (Duverger 1964: xvi).

While a similar hope is expressed in subtler terms in the more recent work of Heath *et al.* who comment that assertions of causal processes

must necessarily have a tentative and provisional character. In the absence of real life experiments, survey data can never be conclusive of causality. At most we can say that the balance of the evidence favours one interpretation rather than another. To assess the impact of social or political change, moreover, we clearly have to make some causal assumptions. As our data and methods improve, we shall no doubt be able to make better causal assumptions. We hope that other scholars will be able in due course to improve upon the procedures used ... (Heath *et al* 1991: 201).

Of course, the irony of this situation is that since the discoveries of figures such as Einstein, Bohr and Heisenberg, the natural and physical sciences themselves have been locked in to a century-long debate over just these three subversions which has placed classical scientific inquiry's focus upon causality and objective truth under question; a questioning that has proved so severe that many have identified it as a paradigm shift (see, for example, Ploman



1985; Hawking 1988). One stream of thought inspired by these discoveries is actually concerned with notions of complexity itself (Aida *et al.* 1985)

However, fascinating as the three subversions are, this chapter will concentrate, at least explicitly, only on that which undermines the assumption that an event or phenomena has an identifiable and limited series of significant causes and effects. This concentration occurs for three reasons: firstly, it is within the realm of causality that I believe, and hopefully this chapter will show, we can most clearly come to appreciate why analysts experience a sense of complexity; secondly, the challenge both to the assumption that the analyst can remain separate from the analysed and to the notion of a fully apprehendable reality have been made adequately elsewhere, particularly in the canon of literature now usually labelled 'postmodern'<sup>3</sup>; and thirdly, while challenges to those two assumptions have led to fascinating, ground-breaking theoretical research, I hope to show that it is the questioning of causality via complexity that presents the most practical way forward within the realm of more empirical work, .

As such, this chapter begins by analysing the dominant model of causality used in socio-political analysis. It then suggests three fundamental problems with this model which when acknowledged show why we may experience a sense of complexity. The chapter then proceeds to draw out some of the repercussions for socio-political analysis resulting from the acknowledgement of complexity.

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<sup>3</sup>It may be the case that the central tenets of postmodernism can be re-thought in the light of complexity, as the third point made here in fact suggests, but this is clearly a project for a later work.

## CAUSALITY IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

Causality has been a central concern of the analytical endeavour ever since Aristotle identified the concept of the “efficient cause” which he described as “the source of motion” (Bunge 1979: p.31). In essence Aristotle had isolated in his *Metaphysics*, the goal of much human analysis - the discovery of why things happen, the active origin of phenomena. Since Aristotle, discussion of causality in most disciplines has shown an ever-growing appreciation of the artificiality of identifying single or over-arching causes for any occurrence and, consequently, a realisation of the complexity and subtlety of causal processes. This development has been particularly strong in social and political analysis - in all likelihood because human behaviour presents the most multi-faceted phenomena for analysts. However, the realisation has also occurred in science more recently with the growth of theories of chaos and complexity. Nevertheless, it should be stated that, especially in social science and maybe particularly in politics, the theoretical realisation of complex causal processes has not been translated into much methodological reform. Much of this thesis is concerned with this disjuncture - while acknowledging that at a more or less conscious level political analysts are aware of intense complexity, the thesis attempts to display how this awareness can be more fully translated into the actual analytic process.

However, the following section will briefly explore other attempts to understand causality and in so doing display how an awareness of complexity has grown.

Much of the formal thinking about causality since the Enlightenment has been concerned with the notion of efficient cause as being the necessary and sufficient condition for an event to occur. Galileo provided one of the most influential of definitions in these terms:

that and no other is to be called cause, at the presence of which the effect always follows, and at whose removal the effect disappears (Bunge 1979: 33).

In other words, an event is 'necessary' for another event to occur if the second event never occurs without the first; and an event is 'sufficient' for another event, if the second event always follows the first. Thus the passing of my forefinger across my thumbpad with considerable pressure is a necessary cause of a clicking sound and, although I may adapt the movement of my finger over my thumb, that movement is reasonably sufficient as it is very difficult to avoid any clicking sound.

While this definition is undoubtedly rigorous and has played a significant role in formal logic, and to a lesser extent natural science, for the analysis of human behaviour, it is a far too rigid and deterministic definition. Social analysts have been required to develop an approach to causality which approaches analysis in an environment where there are multiple causes of each event, each of which may or may not have multiple effects which themselves will, in turn, have multiple effects. And yet, simultaneously, social analysts have wanted to avoid ditching completely the satisfying explanatory power of a more rigid approach to causality as represented by Galileo and natural science. It is with an attempt to create models and approaches which straddle this thin line between the explanatory advantages of rigidity and realistic flexibility that much post-Enlightenment thinking about causality in human behaviour has been concerned.

It was with the development of the Enlightenment, that thinkers first began to break free of the rigidity exemplified by Galileo. Both David Hume and Immanuel Kant, in their different ways began to observe a more complex and sophisticated process as work behind the identification of cause. Hume argued that as analysts we only observe regular sequences of events, in effect nothing more than a series of occurrences following one another in time. Onto this sequence we impose a pattern which we believe constitutes an underlying series of causes but which, in reality, exists nowhere but inside our minds. Hume's arguments led, ultimately, to the approach of positivism where pure observation of patterns of events becomes the goal of analysis rather than the attempt to impose abstract and unobservable principles (Hume 1902: *passim*). By acknowledging that there was a disjuncture between what analysts describe or explain through causality and what may actually be the reality of that causality, Hume opened-up the space for the development of an approach which accepted that social reality may be more complex, or at least other, than we describe it.

Kant also created a similar conceptual space. Kant was more comfortable with the notion that causality did actually exist in reality but, like Hume, he recognised that human analysis was heavily determined by its conceptual formations rather than being a pure abstraction from reality (of course, Kant, unlike Hume, believed these conceptual formations, including causality, to possess an *a priori* validity originating as they did in human rationality) (Kant 1964: *passim*). Kant was, thus, to be the inspiration for the more detailed thought about the degree of complexity involved in the social which occurred with the flourishing of socio-political analysis in the nineteenth century. As Max Weber stated, his approach was based upon,

the basic principle of the modern theory of knowledge which goes back to Kant (that) concepts are primarily means of thought for the intellectual mastery of empirical data and can only be that (quoted in Outhwaite 1987:100).

For Weber, and many of his contemporaries such as Rickert, Menger, Tonnies and Simmel, empirical reality is massively complex and all analytical concepts, including notions of cause and effect, are merely ideal types. Weber wrote:

If ... I wish to conceptualise 'sect' in a *genetic* fashion, e.g. in reference to certain important cultural significances which the 'sectarian spirit' has had for modern culture, certain characteristics of both become *essential* because they stand in an adequate causal relationship to those effects. However, the concepts thereupon become ideal-typical, i.e. in full conceptual purity these phenomena either do not exist at all or only in single instances. Here as elsewhere it is the case that every concept which is not *purely* classificatory diverges from reality (quoted in Outhwaite 1987:101).

Weber's approach is reflected later in this chapter where his notion of ideal-types are analogous to my argument that social analysis provides useful simplifications which depart from the actual complexity of social phenomena. As Outhwaite puts it:

The problem as Weber sees it is not, *pace* Hume, that there are no causal connections in reality, but that there are too many of them for us

to handle. We therefore have to select some of them, and selection here involves both the focusing on a particular link or set of links in a causal chain and the simplification of the relations in that chain itself. The establishment of one or more such simplified sequences provides us with approximation to the real causal relations, which are in a strict sense unknowable in virtue of their complexity (Outhwaite 1987: 102).

This sentiment also has its analog in the consideration given to 'focus' and 'simplification' in my analysis below.

However, it was a less radical (philosophically) nineteenth century shift towards an appreciation of the complexity of social phenomena that had the deepest influence on analysis. Marx's notion of the dialectic at work in material phenomena clearly contained within it the assertion that social events which may appear as distinct are in fact closely implied one in the other by highly complex processes of causality. Unlike Weber however, Marx always assumed that this complexity could be fully apprehended by the analyst employing an adequately scientific mode of analysis. The complexity inherent in Marx's approach was drawn-out most rigorously by Althusser.

Famously, Althusser asserts that social change results from overdetermination. This, he contrasts with more traditional notions of determination current at the time in Marxist analysis, where the contradictions inherent in the economic infrastructure are seen as determining (in essence, a process of causal necessity) the social, cultural and political superstructure. Overdetermination implies that the relation between economic contradiction and other forms of social contradiction is never one of simple one-way determination. Instead

contradiction is overlaid upon contradiction with each and all modifying one another. The most Althusser will concede is that economic contradiction may determine which elements are dominant in a social formation but then only, as his enigmatic phrase has it, "in the last instance" (Althusser 1969: *passim*; 113).

Most importantly for this thesis, Althusser argues that overdetermination cannot be understood in terms of accepted models of causality between social phenomena. Althusser identifies two dominant models of causality which he rejects as simplistic, partial or mystificatory. The first is the straightforward notion that there exists a 'transitive' relation between two distinct events or classes of events which are posited as cause and effect. This model can be best assigned in the treatment above to that proposed by Hume, Kant and those who come before them. Althusser sees this model as having heavily structured the more economist approaches to Marxism he specifically wants to reject. The second model he calls 'expressive causality' and associates with Hegelian thinkers, and with historicist aspects of Marxist analysis. This model posits a specific causal relationship between a social whole and its parts (an analytical capacity which the first model does not possess) in which each element in a totality are expressions of the essence of the whole (Althusser & Balibar 1970: 186).

In opposition to these models Althusser proposes the concept of 'structural' or 'metonymic causality' which he argued were truer to the dialectical method. In these models a social structure exists through its effects or, put another way, effects both constitute a structure and are modified by virtue of constituting such a structure:

... effects are not outside the structure, are not a pre-existing object, element or space in which the structure arrives to *imprint its mark*: on

the contrary, it implies that the structure is immanent in its effect, a cause immanent in its effects in the Spinozist sense of the term, that *the whole existence of structure consists of its effects*, in short that the structure, which is merely a specific combination of its particular elements, is nothing outside its effects (Althusser & Balibar 1970: 188-9).

Althusser's approach is fascinating because it tries to maintain some notion of distinct social moments related causally whilst simultaneously overcoming the simple dualism of 'transitive' or 'expressive' causality as he styles the alternative models. For Althusser, it seems, social causality ceases to be a straightforward motion through time and/or space between two moments and instead becomes a highly complex relationship between structuring tendencies which work both at the level of the element and the totality. However, one cannot help feeling that Althusser is struggling against a level of complexity beyond his own, or possibly any human, understanding and, as such, is attempting to unite two irresolvable goals - an acknowledgement of full social complexity and the production of a closed analytical system fully conversant with that complexity. In this context, it would seem that a return to Weber's more resigned acceptance of a disjuncture between analytical imperatives and social reality may be more fruitful. Indeed, this thesis follows Weber's line although with the appended belief that the introduction of a tactical element to subvert the simplicity of the analysis may prove fruitful in starting analysis along a route that may lead to a fuller apprehension of social complexity.

More recently the analysis of the social has been taken into further realms of complexity by Roberto Unger. He argues that there are three realms of existence: ideas, events and a third



realm constituted of “the order of consciousness, mind, culture or social life” (Unger 1976: 107). Causality, for Unger, is appropriate only as an analytical tool when approaching the limited category of events, while ideas are analysed by the method of logical analysis. The ‘third realm’ requires another method which he calls ‘appositeness’ or ‘symbolic interpretation’. Unger admits that the most demanding problem for the analyst is to understand the “precise relationship of social life to the realms of events and of ideas” (Unger 1976: 117). However, in the face of the complexity that this problem presents, Unger retreats understandably, like this thesis to a temporary position:

These are riddles to which I have no answer. Nevertheless, if we were to await their definitive solution, we might continue forever unable to think coherently about man and society. Therefore, one must look for partial and provisional solutions (Unger 1976: 117).

However, this thesis, whilst accepting that in the face of some apparently insuperable analytical problems one must employ ‘provisonal solutions’, it is vital that one constructs such a solution which simultaneously undermines the need for that provisionality by pointing to a distant goal of more permanent methods for apprehending such complexity.

Interestingly for this thesis, Unger’s retreat results, in part, from his emphasis upon ‘circular causality’ which is a key starting-point for his development of ‘appositeness’ as an analytical approach to the ‘third realm’. The idea lies on a trajectory begun by functionalist analysis, where the ‘system’ (a key concept in functionalism) is defined in part by the fact that elements within it are related to one another in a causal loop, i.e. a change in one element causes change in a series of others which, ultimately, causes a further change in the original element

(Demerath & Peterson 1967: *passim*). However, this functionalist approach is still essentially 'transitive', to use Althusser's terminology. For Unger the relationship between the different elements in circular causality is that much closer, that much more linked in to the elements' very existence rather than any one distinct change in their nature, that the concept comes much closer to Althusser's own struggle to suggest this relationship in describing the 'structural causality' that exists between whole and part. And, of particular interest to this thesis, Unger contrasts this circular causality to the standard approach in most social analysis of 'simple causality' which is sequential and 'transitive':

Simple causality seems inevitably to lead to reductionism in social theory, to the singling out of certain key factors as prior to others or as determinants of them. But circular causality, according to which all the elements of a system cause one another reciprocally, eviscerates sequence, a distinguishing attribute of causal explanation (Unger 1976: 14).

In fact, Unger sees the relationship between elements in circular causality as so close that he uses the metaphor of style in painting to express this relationship:

The distinctive elements of style in painting do not cause one another, nor are they logically entailed by each other. They cannot be ordered serially, for there is no feature that comes first. Nevertheless, the idea of style describes a particular historical movement, placed in space and time (Unger 1976: 14).

Unger's analysis is also reflected in the ideas of Edgar Morin, the French anthropologist, who sees social forms as constituted by a staggeringly complex mix of circular causal processes each of which is involved in further circular causal processes with one another (Morin 1985: *passim*; Morin's ideas are studied further below).

Unger's and Morin's observations are echoed very closely in the argument developed below with its emphasis both upon circular causality in the form of retroaction and inter-retroaction and also in the more tactical side of the approach in this thesis which asserts that the enormous complexity implied by circular causality will ultimately outstrip the limited methodologies available to us within the context of the Western tradition of social and political analysis.

The final and most recent concern with the problems of complex causality have originated with thinkers such as Bhaskar and Sayer working in the realist tradition (Sayer 1992; Bhaskar 1978). In particular, there has been a focus upon causal systems and the distinctions that exists for such systems within the natural scientific and social scientific disciplines. Realists have been critical of the assumption that the goal of analysis should be to discover highly regular patterns of causality. In natural science this is often achieved and it is often assumed, according to realists, that the social sciences are immature or less effective because they very rarely find such causal regularity.

Realists have asserted that natural science is able to discover such regularity because it is dealing with 'closed systems' where two significant conditions exist. Firstly, there is no change in the object acting as cause. Secondly, there is no change in the external conditions of the cause relating to its operation as cause. The natural sciences often deal with systems

fulfilling such conditions either in nature or in the laboratory. In fact, experimental science involves ensuring that such conditions exist for the purposes of the experiment. Social systems, however, very rarely fulfil these conditions. Change, both in the intrinsic nature of a cause and in the extrinsic circumstances of a cause are often constant and thus social systems can be styled as 'open' rather than 'closed systems'. Thus the discovery of regular causal patterns in social science akin to natural science is an impossibility according to the realists.

Sayer is very critical of some social scientists who are either unaware of the differences between closed and open systems or simply ignore the difference and assume that social systems can be treated as closed. Some economists, in particular, are guilty of such analysis (Sayer 1992: 124-125). As such, Sayer argues:

... we must ... abandon the usual methodologists' quest for the holy grail of a single model for all purposes (Sayer 1992: 152).

Realists have identified with great clarity the greater complexity that exists in the subject of social analysis and the fact that this has significant implications for our assumptions about and methods of analysis. This thesis agrees deeply with this developing emphasis upon complexity both in the realist approach and all of the above approaches. As such many of the ideas outlined below have strong similarities to those outlined above. However there is one significant difference. This thesis is a direct consideration of the suggestion that social and political causality may not be just more complex than hitherto accepted but may, in fact, be too complex either for the accepted methodologies and structures of Western analysis or for human understanding itself. In this context, the thesis does not propose, like the approaches outlined above, solutions in the form of new concepts, models or methodologies but instead

suggests that an approach is formulated to socio-political analysis which subverts our assumptions and thus poses questions which may lead to a wholly new approach.

It should also be stated here that many of the above approaches deal with causality and social analysis within the context of philosophical and methodological debate, where views about causality and analysis are often explicit. This thesis directs itself far more to the concrete analysis of British political science in relation to study of the Labour Party. Theoretical and detailed methodological debate have not been a feature of this area of study, so what follows is an analysis of what implicitly underlies much of this area of study. It is also worth saying that while many of the writers on the Labour Party discussed below may accept many aspects of my philosophical comments below, the thrust of this thesis is to argue that such acceptance does not seem to have had any significant impact on the bulk of the work on the Labour Party. In short, a disjuncture exists between the professed beliefs of Labour Party analysts with regards to notions of causality, complexity and truth and the actual methods and modes of their written work.

The dominant model of cause and effect actually *in use* in political analysis, including that of the Labour Party, can be called 'linear'. It has three defining features: it functions through an implicit association with a spatial metaphor; it is usually unidirectional, i.e. causes impact as effects not vice versa; and it focuses analytical attention upon very specific sets of causal processes. These features can be elucidated quite easily since this model is so widely used.

In 'Political Change' by Heath *et al*, the linear causal model is clear:

Given our findings that nonreligious people are more likely to vote Labour, these changes (the decline in church attendance and in religious identity) suggest that Labour will have benefited from the decline of religion ... we estimate that, taken on its own, the decline in religion will have led to a 4.0 point decline in the Conservatives' share and a 4.1 point increase in Labour's (1991: 205).

The authors' implicitly assert here that a certain factor (the decline in church attendance and religious identity) will impact across space and time to have a perceivable effect (the decline in one Party's vote and the rise in another's). This assertion makes clear use of a model which inherently assumes that cause and effect are linked across a distance of space and time and that the interaction between that cause and effect can be adequately represented through the identification of one, unidirectional flow of action. A further example on a similar topic but employing a very different style of analysis can be found in Miliband:

Nor would the Labour Party's integration into parliamentary politics have taken place ... had it not had its parallel in the growing integration of the trade unions into the framework of modern capitalism. This integration has not been smooth, but it has been continuous; and the crucial influence it has had on the political ways of the Labour Party explains why its various aspects occupy so large a place in the following pages (Miliband 1972: 14).

Despite Miliband's less positivistic approach, he still employs the same causal model based upon a unidirectional flow and an even clearer spatial metaphor which deliberately highlights the 'parallel' but causally linked relation between the integration of Party and unions.

While Hughes and Wintour in a far more journalistic analysis of Labour reproduce the prime role given to linear cause and effect models in academic studies:

The conduct, course and outcome of the 1987 election campaign moulded the policy review ... The main elements of the campaign became reference points for the review (Hughes & Wintour 1990: 35).

Once again a spatially and temporally distinct pair of factors are causally linked in a unidirectional fashion. Continued quoting would be repetitive. A cursory study of any piece of socio-political analysis will reveal the use of the linear model in abundance.

The other crucial feature of this model is its tendency to focus analytical attention upon a very specific set of causal processes. This 'focus' amounts to the technique of keeping the quantity of relevant causal processes to a minimum in any analytical process through a narrow definition of the spatial and temporal framework for the analysis. For example, it is clear that the decline in religious identity etc., in the Heath *et al.* extract, has a range of effects vastly greater than the sole effect of the changes in voting patterns for the two main parties. However, by limiting their spatial focus to the causal line of impact existing between religious identity and voting patterns, Heath *et al.* can rule out reference to other effects such as a drop in the sales of bibles or the growth of the evangelical wing in the Church of England.

It is also clear that the decline in religious identity etc. is itself an effect and hence other causes clearly exist further back along the line of causal impact which can thus also be said to have changed voting patterns. Such a cause may be the development of a rationalist-humanist critique of religion. This critique can be seen as a cause that is more temporally distant, i.e. as an influential movement of the 19th and 20th centuries; however, it can also be seen as a cause that is temporally simultaneous to the decline of religious identity but spatially more distant in that it may promote the changes in voting patterns but only once it has travelled via the closer effect-cum-cause of a decline in religious identity. Therefore, Heath *et al.* can rule out reference to other causes of their *prime cause* by limiting their focus spatially as above to the direct relationship between religious identity and voting patterns or by limiting their focus temporally to a specific time period - which in this case is the period since the early sixties, this being the span of time covered by their surveys.

This process of spatial and temporal limitation is clearly at work in the other examples given above. The integration of the unions into modern capitalism does not have the sole effect of reconciling the Labour Party to parliamentary politics but through a limited spatial focus this is the effect 'foregrounded' by Miliband; and clearly such integration of the unions has its own causes (e.g. the dominance of a labour aristocracy in the trade union movement or the historical influence of liberalism on the unions) which therefore also exist as causes for Labour Party reconciliation but being more spatially or temporally distant they are ruled less relevant and can escape reference. And similarly with Hughes and Wintour, the effects of the "conduct, course and campaign" of the 1987 election clearly have vast effects, too numerous to mention, besides the Policy Review but spatial limitation allows this particular effect to be foregrounded; while the "conduct, course and campaign" of the 1987 election were themselves effects of a wide variety of other causes (such as the existence of a first past the



post electoral system) but which can be ignored by the processes of spatial *and* temporal limitation.

The symbiotic relationship between focus and the other features of the linear model can be gleaned from the above considerations. By utilising a model which is based upon a spatial metaphor and is simultaneously unidirectional, it is easy for an analyst to simply shrink or extend the analytical focus along the line of causal impact in a way which eases the analytical process. The model allows a very limited set of factors to be related causally by implicitly assuming that the relevance or significance of a cause to an effect is enhanced by proximity in space or time. In addition, focus itself, in being a universally accepted technique, simultaneously maintains the resonance of a model which is reliant on both the notion of space and of uni-directionality. These characteristics are themselves implied in 'focus', being a concept unthinkable without the ideas of space and a relatively simple notion of the direction of causal flow.

However, despite the dominance the above features have come to have in socio-political analysis in the form of the linear cause and effect, three fundamental problems can be identified as aspects of this model.

## **THE PROBLEMS OF THE LINEAR MODEL**

The problems outlined below all share the characteristic that they reveal the linear model's tendency to obscure large numbers of other causal processes involved in any one socio-political phenomena. In addition, they suggest that the linear model ignores the wealth of

interactions that occurs between causal processes. In this sense, it can be asserted that the linear model evades the full complexity of society and politics.

### **The Mechanism of Linear Cause and Effect and Hidden Causality**

It is a well-established observation that the notion that the mechanism by which a cause has an effect is unexplainable. David Hume commented:

When we look us towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connexion; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. we only find, that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other (Hume 1902: 63)

Indeed, when we do investigate how one particular cause comes to have an effect, we only discover other causal processes demanding our attention rather than identify a process distinct from the causal (a distinction which is logically required by our investigation). Once again Hume was aware of this problem:

... We learn from anatomy, that the immediate object of power in voluntary motions, is not the member itself which is moved, but certain muscles, and nerves, and animal spirits, and, perhaps, something still more minute and more unknown, through which the motion is

successively propagated, ere it reach the member itself whose motion is the immediate object of volition. Can there be a more certain proof, that the power, by which this whole operation is performed, so far from being directly and fully known by an inward sentiment or consciousness, is, to the last degree mysterious and unintelligible?

(Hume 1902: 66)

We can see this problem in particularly powerful terms when we ask the question in a socio-political context. Let us take a question about the assertion of Heath *et al.* mentioned above: why does the decline in religious identity cause a growth in the Labour vote? This is a question which demands an answer that should provide the mechanism by which a certain cause has an effect. (Heath *et al.* do not provide such an answer; they simply rely on their survey finding that non-religious people are more likely to vote Labour to assert a causal process.)

We can hypothesise about some possible answers ourselves. Maybe those who have lost their religious identity are no longer influenced by the inherent conservatism of the personnel who run the church. Maybe a rejection of the myth of a reward in the afterlife encourages one to seek a better life on earth. Maybe the very process of rejecting one's religious roots encourages one to be more cynical about other establishment traditions and hierarchies. Maybe the Bible and other texts central to religious belief promote an ideology of deference and acceptance of the status quo and such deference and acceptance is no longer reproduced when the texts are rejected along with the religious belief. Maybe acceptance into communities based around the church requires support for the Conservative Party and once this social acceptance is no longer sought there is no consequent obligation to support the

Conservatives. Maybe the Conservative Party was perceived as more friendly to the church and hence church-goers naturally voted for those who shared their commitments and beliefs. And so on, a little thought could extend the list much further.

But what is interesting about these hypotheses is that they all rely on the linear cause and effect model. Our investigation upholds Hume's view that when we ask why a particular cause has a particular effect - when we try to understand the actual mechanism that enables a cause to have an effect - we simply multiply the number of cause and effect processes we have to take into consideration. As such, we get no closer to understanding the actual mechanisms of cause and effect itself but instead reveal our original analysis to be a simplification ignoring vast numbers of other significant factors.

However, there is a qualitative problem raised by this observation. It takes a form similar to Zeno's most famous paradox but applied specifically to cause and effect processes<sup>4</sup>.

As has been mentioned above in the linear model it is implicitly assumed that cause and effect are either spatially or temporally separate, this further implies that for a cause to have its effect, it must undergo some type of process metaphorically akin to travel between two points separated either by space or time. However if, as we have seen, any assertion of cause and effect implies a large number of other cause and effect processes occurring *between* the original cause and the original effect then those *internal* cause and effect processes must

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<sup>4</sup>This paradox can be briefly stated as follows. For a runner to complete a racecourse s/he must first reach the halfway point to the finish. However, once that halfway-point is reached, there is another halfway-point to be reached from the first halfway-point to the finish. The same applies once that second half-way-point has been reached. And so on indefinitely. Hence, it is logically impossible for a runner to complete a racecourse.

themselves imply even further cause and effect processes internal to them and so on *ad infinitum*.

For example, if we accept for the sake of simplicity that the reason a decline in religious identity causes an increase in the Labour vote is because those who reject their religious roots are more likely to become cynical about other established traditions and hierarchies, we are still left with a further question which implies another cause and effect process, i.e. why does the rejection of religious roots cause one to be more cynical about other established traditions and hierarchies? If we attempt to answer this by arguing for example that when an individual rejects their religious roots they tend to face pressure from other established hierarchies such as the family, the workplace, the state, the school etc. to maintain their religion and this causes them to be cynical about those bodies as well, we are still left with the implication of a further cause and effect process and another question, i.e. why does pressure from other bodies to maintain a fading religious belief cause an additional cynical attitude towards them? Or equally we might ask, since there is another cause and effect process implied here, why does the decision of an individual to reject religion cause pressure to be brought upon that individual by other bodies? And so on.

Answers can be given to these questions which appear at first glance to avoid the cause and effect model, such as: because the pressure brought to bear is often unfair or because established bodies have an interest in upholding other established bodies. But a brief thought about these should make clear that they still imply a number of cause and effect models. It can still be asked of the former answer: why does unfair pressure cause cynicism? And it can be asked of the latter: what causes one established body to have an interest in upholding another? The answer to each leads to yet more utilisations of the cause and effect model.

One can see how similar this is to the runner in Zeno's paradox: the cause can never logically reach its impact point as its travel is always subject to the completion of another cause and effect process which is itself subject to yet another and so on. Hence an attempt to *fully* understand one causal process not only multiplies the number of causal processes we must consider but actually *endlessly* multiplies the number of other causal processes we must take into account. Thus the complexity of causality obscured by the linear model appears mind-boggling.

However, just as many have objected to Zeno's paradox by stating that a runner clearly does reach an end point in the distance, so one might object that causes clearly do have effects despite the paradox. But this objection simply proves that motion occurs, it still does not *logically* refute Zeno. Such an objection suggests that it is not Zeno who is wrong but that his paradox has identified a flaw in our understanding of space, distance and motion. Similarly, just as the cause and effect paradox cannot be refuted logically despite the apparent truth of the cause and effect interaction, so this suggests a flaw in our model of the interaction. In short, the linear model in its convenient admission of focus into socio-political analysis - through unidirectionality and the spatial metaphor - summons the multiple spectres of other linear causal processes which must be implicitly accepted to allow the causal process, which has been focused-upon, to operate. However, these same causal processes must simultaneously be ignored if the actual model itself is not to appear as sleight of hand and simplification.

## **The Problems of Unidirectionality and More Hidden Causality**

Another feature of the linear model mentioned above is its unidirectionality. In all but a minority of cases, when a particular causal process is identified, its flow is limited to one direction. A factor, identified as a cause, is positioned in space or time as occurring prior to another factor upon which it has an impact in the form of an effect. The interaction of these two factors, in this unidirectional form, is usually presented as complete and finished; its constitution resides in the one movement of prior cause to secondary effect, no more work - in the form of identifying effects back upon the initial cause or in the form of identifying oscillations of modification between the two factors as fractions of the causal process - is usually deemed to be necessary to understand or define the cause and effect interaction.

However, this characteristic of unidirectionality is immediately questioned when we acknowledge the fact that a high level of undecidability has often existed in the identification of which factors are causes and which effects.

For example, Heath *et al.* assert that the decline of religious identity has increased the Labour Party's vote. However, it is equally plausible that the increase in Labour's vote - which has inevitably enhanced the credibility of the Party and provided it with power - has caused a decline in religious identity. The same reversal applies to Miliband's assertions. It is quite conceivable that the parliamentarianism of the Labour Party has acted as the cause of the trade union's integration into capitalism rather than vice versa as Miliband asserts.

Such reversals can of course fuel great academic debates. One need think only of certain aspects of the nature/nurture dispute: long arguments have raged, and continue to rage, over whether some inherent physiological factor causes our social structures and behaviour, or whether our social structures and behaviour cause us to construct a model of behaviour that posits a physiological cause. However, such disputes consistently display a stubborn undecidability. It seems unlikely that it could ever convincingly be proved that a decline in religious identity causes a growth in the Labour vote or vice versa. Or that the nature of trade unions determines the nature of the Party rather than the Party determining the unions. Conclusive evidence for proofs such as these is rarely, if ever, found.

A more constructive, but less employed, response would be to accept that neither factor in a causal process can be fully identified simply as 'cause' or simply as 'effect'. Instead both may be interwoven in a complex process of retroaction, where each factor constantly affects the other to construct certain individual or multiple outcomes.

If we take the example of Heath *et al.* once again, it is clear that the analysts have identified a simple linear process whereby the decline in religious identity increases the Labour vote. However, as has been mentioned above we can also see how a relatively simple retroaction<sup>5</sup> might also be underway whereby the increase in Labour's vote actually encourages the decline in religious identity as credibility and power is thus provided for the Party.

Following from this, we could identify yet another retroaction: as the increase in the Labour vote is now the cause of the decline in religious identity, so that effect can affect the new

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<sup>5</sup>The use of the term 'retroaction' is itself problematic, although I can think of no better term, since it still implies that one cause is initially originary of the process, in this case the decline in religious identity.



cause in the sense that the decline in religious identity - caused by the growth in the Labour vote which was itself first postulated as an effect of the decline in religious identity - can itself cause an increase in the Labour vote. Hence, we have identified a circular rather than a linear relationship in which the decline in religious identity and the growth of the Labour vote act as both cause and effect for one another.

This retroactive feature itself increases the number of causal processes to be taken into account when identifying and analysing any particular phenomena. A fact which, like the above augmentations hidden by the linear model, enhances the complexity of the subject matter under study. However, the number of relevant causal processes is further increased when we recognise that the existence, nature and intensity of one causal process cannot be operating in a vacuum. Retroactions are deeply affected themselves by other retroactions.

For instance, if we consider the intensity of the retroaction between the two factors of religious identity and the Labour vote to be an effect itself, we might identify a cause, such as a tendency for church leaders to speak-out for progressive ideals, to weaken the extent to which a decline in religious identity increases the Labour vote and the increase in the Labour vote encourages decline in religious identity. However, we cannot assume that the causal interaction between such a cause and the retroaction is itself unidirectional, clearly the intensity of the retroaction will itself retroact upon the tendency of church leaders to speak-out for progressive ideals, i.e. if the correspondence between the decline in religious identity and the rise in the Labour vote and vice versa is not that great then church leaders may not feel obliged to speak-out for progressive ideals which might itself retroact back by increasing the intensity of the original retroaction. Furthermore such a tendency on the part of church leaders may be affected by other causes with which they have a causal relationship, such as

strong social contacts and friendships between establishment politicians and church leaders, which will in turn logically have an effect back on the original interaction. Clearly the validity or the understanding of any mechanism of any cause and effect is subject to the complex web of inter-retroactions occurring *throughout* a socio-political system. Thus as one writer has observed, any attempt to identify or understand a causal process requires the identification and understanding of "the intertwining of myriads of processes of inter-retroactions" (Morin 1985: 64).

However, these considerations deal only with causes and effects separated, in the linear model, by space or by the relevance established by focus. It seems less likely that those separated by time, such as Hughes and Wintour's observations about the 1987 election and the Policy Review, are free of inter-retroactions. However, this is not the case - even here the linear model cannot be allowed to stand. Although inter-retroaction operates in temporal matters at the supposedly less concrete level of perception and the interpretative constructions associated with perception, there is still a wealth of complex interactions hidden from view by the linear model.

For example, it can be observed that the nature of the Policy Review acts as a cause not only of how we view and make sense of the 1987 campaign in retrospect but also of how we come to view the campaign actually as a cause. Only once the Policy Review becomes fact do we regard the 1987 campaign as a cause of that fact. Thus the Policy Review - posited by Hughes and Wintour as an effect - is also its own type of retrospective cause affecting a certain interpretation of previous events.

To return to Hume, we can identify such a view in the philosopher's work:

... the mind wills a certain event: Immediately another event, unknown to ourselves, and totally different from the one intended, is produced: This event produces another, equally unknown: Till at last, through a long succession, the desired event is produced. But if the original power were felt, it must be known; since all power is relative to its effect. And *vice versa*, if the effect be not known, the power cannot be known nor felt (Hume 1902: 66-67).

This is similar to Nietzsche's assertion that the effect is the cause of the cause. Without an effect such as the pain resulting from a pinprick, we would not identify the cause, in this case the pinprick, as a cause. Hence the linear, unidirectional relationship between cause and effect becomes less clear and the very linearity of the process appears as a mental construction itself caused by the apparent effect. Taking this observation a step further, Nietzsche writes in a way similar to the comments above about the Policy Review and the 1987 campaign, that:

Before the effect one believes in different causes than one does afterward (Nietzsche 1974: 210).

This, in itself, introduces extra unconsidered causal factors and interactions into our analysis of a particular event in the form of the causes which determine the nature of the analyst's identification of a causal process itself.

However, even more causal processes must be taken into account when we observe that further retroactions exist as the result of the same ability of humans to think retrospectively

albeit in a different, more varied, form. This is the way in which existing factors cause a reinterpretation of past events; a reinterpretation which itself retroacts back upon the initial cause of the reinterpretation in the first place. For example, the relationship of religious identity to the growth of the Labour Party will be influenced by debates about the radical inheritance of Christianity in which, for example, the collective lifestyle of early Christians is re-interpreted as a particularly significant model to be imitated or taken as an ideal rather than ignored or denigrated; a reinterpretation, the credibility of which will be enhanced as the Labour Party grows in credibility, a growth which will in part be enhanced by the growing credibility of that reinterpretation.

Such retrospective analysis can also, of course, be applied to that which is barely history such as popular perceptions of very recent events in the Party or the church's development which may have a bearing on the intensity of the central retroaction focused upon here. For example, the effects of polls or the analyses carried out by the media are examples of how retrospective analysis of the very recent past can have powerful effects.

Unlike the way retrospection allows an 'effect' to cause the construction or identification of a 'cause', this retrospection, in the form of re-interpreting the past introduces a whole new layer of inter-retroactive factors into our attempt to understand the causality of certain phenomena - a huge enhancement of the complexity of any subject matter.

These three criticisms of the linear model all display the way in which that model hides or ignores vast numbers of causal processes which have a major bearing on any attempt to isolate, identify and understand the specific cause/s and effects relevant to a particular socio-

political phenomena. Hence the complexity of the events and factors which we analyse appear to be far more complex than we have either admitted or appreciated.

Such complexity suggests that it may be valuable to see any one modification, any single effect as an abstracted point in a continuously active, complex mass of inter-retroactions rather than as the sole outcome of a single, or very limited set of, cause/s. In this schema, one effect can never be linked only to one cause but is rather the composite result (held artificially in stasis by the analytical process) of a myriad of criss-crossing retroactions.

We can provide this notion with greater clarity through the use of a metaphorical form. It can be said that while in the linear model, an effect is traced in a more or less straight line from the cause, in an inter-retroactive model, the effect can be regarded as a point on a sphere, the surface of which is densely covered with the traces of the interlaced lines of other cause and effect processes. The power of this metaphor resides in two features. It allows us to picture ourselves choosing any two points on the sphere (i.e. any two factors of socio-political change) and trace indirect lines of cause from one to the other by virtue of the interlacing of many lines. This clearly illustrates the notion that a multiplicity of causal interactions play a part in the production of any one effect. Secondly, a causal line traversing the sphere as a circle has no beginning or end just as no causal link between two factors can be said to indicate that one of those factors is the originary point of the retroaction.

### **The Unexplained Causality of 'Focus'**

A final critique of the linear model can be stated more briefly and deals with the question of 'focus' and yet more hidden causal processes which must remain from if the linear model is to

operate effectively. When an analyst investigates a particular causal process there is an underlying assumption at work which allows certain causes to be deemed more relevant than others thus allowing focus. For example, Hughes and Wintour (quoted above) assert that the course of the 1987 campaign "moulded" the Policy Review. This is a clear example of a shrinking down the causal line of impact: although the course of the 1987 campaign was clearly affected by earlier factors such as Margaret Thatcher's trip to Eastern Europe, this factor can be ruled less significant in that it is temporally more distant. The causal significance of the trip appears not as intense for the Policy review as the election campaign itself. Spatial factors<sup>6</sup> also play a part in establishing such focus. For example, a by-election in an obscure council ward will also immediately be regarded as less significant to the Policy Review than the course of the election campaign.

The role of significance in the maintenance of focus relies heavily upon an unspoken assumption of a causal process. This assumption amounts to the claim that the closer the proximity, in space or time, of one factor to another, the more intense the causal interaction. However, this claim itself relies upon a causal process, namely that variations in distance cause variations in the intensity of causality. Thus, as in the preceding criticism, the efficacy of the linear model once again implies a causal process which is hidden from view and unexplained. Just as the identification of a linear causal process in a certain socio-political phenomena only appears to provide understanding by ignoring a mass of other causal factors operating as part of the 'mechanism' of that causal process, so the same appearance of understanding also relies upon another hidden and unexplained causal process relating to

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<sup>6</sup>The term 'spatial' is used loosely to refer both to geographical space and to what might be termed 'organisational space', i.e. distance in terms of organisational hierarchies - for example, the notion that Parliament is closer to the centre of power than a small local branch of the Labour Party.

'focus'. This critique, like the previous, augments the number of causal processes (and the interactions between such processes) which must be taken into account. A fact which only again enhances the great complexity of the subject-matter under study.

Of course, the real challenge for an analyst is how to reshape analytical methods to respond to the enormously enhanced complexity represented by this critique and by those presented above.

However before this is attempted, there is still one question which must be answered: why is this high level of complexity ignored? Or put more specifically: why has the linear model of cause and effect become so all-pervasive? In answering this, we will, in fact, aid our attempt to reshape analytical methods in the light of complexity.

## **THE POWER OF THE LINEAR MODEL**

The linear model of cause and effect allows a structuring of analysis that is relatively simple compared to the complexity of the inter-retroactive model and it is this that provides the clue to understanding why the model is so powerful and popular. It is instructive to make a detour via the concept of power-knowledge in the work of Michel Foucault to understand why this provision of simplicity is important.

For Foucault power was inseparably linked to knowledge. He usually attempted to display this through historical analyses which showed how knowledge and power continually produce one another (e.g. Foucault 1973,1977,1978). However on some occasions he wrote and spoke more explicitly and theoretically about the links between power and knowledge:

... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations ... the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge (Foucault 1977: 27-28).

But despite this clear belief that power and knowledge are closely interwoven it seems that Foucault worked at all times with two linked but distinct notions of what form power-knowledge took.

At certain points, particularly in his studies of the penal and psychiatric system, Foucault considered power-knowledge to refer to quite a rigid conception of technologies of control in modern society such as psychiatric medicine, law and imprisonment. These technologies of control clearly link the development of such fields of knowledge as medicine, criminology and ideas about punishment and surveillance with established institutional forms of power such as the medical establishment, the legal system and the prison system. Foucault has stated:



... the fact that societies can become the object of scientific observation, that human behaviour became, from a certain point on, a problem to be analysed and resolved, all that is bound up, I believe, with mechanisms of power - which, at a given moment, indeed, analysed that object (society, man, etc.) and presented it as a problem to be resolved. So the birth of the human sciences goes hand in hand with the installation of new mechanisms of power (Foucault 1988: 106).

However, Foucault never saw such operations of power-knowledge as homogenous and fully conscious - he has no '1984' vision of a Big Brother carefully manipulating knowledge to maintain a total grip over society. For Foucault power-knowledge was always a battle between competing interpretations of reality each of which has its own implications for the nature of technologies of control. In the foreword to a text he collaborated upon and which brings together and studies a variety of medico-legal texts relating to a parricide in the nineteenth century, he writes of those documents:

... in their totality and their variety they form neither a composite work nor an exemplary text, but rather a strange contest, a confrontation, a power relation, a battle among discourses. And yet it cannot simply be described as a single battle; for several separate combats were being fought out at the same time and intersected each other (1982: x).

He goes on to say as he says elsewhere, that his aim is to draw a map of the web of conflicting and intersecting strands of power-knowledge.

The 'Big Brother' model of control is further weakened by Foucault when he asserts that power-knowledge is not just a matter for rulers, the ruled also play a central role in their control, they adopt power-knowledge discourses that are part of the totality of strategic relations that construct a certain hegemony:

Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of all power relations, and serving as a general matrix ... One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run-through the social body as a whole (1978: 94).

This comment leads to Foucault's other conception of power/knowledge. In this other approach Foucault proposes that power-knowledge is an aspect of everyday life and human interaction. That when interacting with others we bring a specific quality to our relations which is inseparably made-up of understanding and control. He states:

Power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations (Foucault 1978: 94).

And more specifically when asked which subjects oppose one another, he replies:

This is just a hypothesis, but I would say it's all against all. There aren't immediately given subjects of the struggle, one the proletariat, the other the bourgeoisie. Who fights against whom? We all fight each other. And there is always within each of us something that fights something else (Foucault 1980: 208).

However, one need not take Foucault's word alone for the presence of power/knowledge. Complexity, as outlined above, contains within itself a notion of power/knowledge. The notion that the analyst/analysis can be separated from the world they inhabit and from the power-effects of that world is a simplification for it ignores the processes of inter-retroaction outlined above. The analyst and his/her analysis will clearly have an effect on many of the factors that surround them while these factors' modification will have an effect back on the analyst and hence his/her analysis. Much of this process no doubt occurs at an almost imperceptible level where the most fundamental concepts and categories used by an analyst will be modified by the analyst's environment. For example, all analysts are aware of the phenomena whereby simply using certain concepts, discussing them with others, and seeing others using them we become more convinced of their rightness; our use of a certain category reinforces its use by the academic community we feel ourselves to be a part of, which in turn reinforces our use of it.

However we can perceive, at a more blatant and simplified level, three ways in which the analyst and the analysis are part of a constantly remodifying inter-retroaction in relation to the subject matter under analysis. For example, let us take a work of analysis which asserts that an effect of the 1992 election was to encourage many more voters to consider, and maybe

actually accept, the need for electoral reform. We can identify three ways in which this act of analysis is closely and dynamically interwoven with the effects of such an act.

i.) The analysis itself may encourage those who read it, and those who are affected by the views of those who read it, to consider the need for electoral reform; and/or to encourage those who read it to regard electoral reform as an idea growing in popularity and therefore as one worthy of consideration; and/or to encourage those who read it to regard, or help to construct the impression that, the 1992 election was the turning-point for those campaigning for electoral reform (i.e. the 1992 election takes on a semi-mythical status in the battle for democratic extension in Britain) thus improving the prospects of growing support for electoral reform. Thus the effect of the 1992 election of encouraging support for electoral reform is enhanced through the medium of the analysis itself.

ii.) These effects of the analysis - enhancing support for electoral reform - then ensure that the analysis itself becomes apparently increasingly accurate as it has its effect, a modification itself which enhances the power of the analysis to convince people of the need for electoral reform. Hence the actual standing of the analysis is closely interwoven with the power it exerts within society - the analysis is involved in a retroactive relationship with the effect it has on its readers (which in this case works to reinforce the conclusions of the analysis) and is thus unavoidably drawn into a complex web of power-knowledge.

iii.) However, the power-knowledge role of the analysis is not just observable in its direct relation to its effects, it is also involved in an inter-retroactive self-reinforcement with other processes in which power-knowledge is produced. In short it is, unsurprisingly, a cause and an effect in *inter*-retroactive processes. For example, the 1992 election modified or constructed a

series of factors such as enhancing disillusion with traditional Labour Party principles and structures within Labour itself (witnessed by the enhanced power of the Party 'modernisers') which has encouraged, and made more popular, analysis about electoral reform (for example, the interest in the Plant Commission), since such analysis is less likely to be regarded as irrelevant or damaging to Party interests, a view prevalent in traditional Labour circles. The analyst's conclusions about electoral reform, which are now more likely to be read enthusiastically, then help to further encourage this interest in, and support for, electoral reform, in the ways indicated above, hence encouraging disillusion with the traditional Labour beliefs which oppose electoral reform, in turn encouraging interest in electoral reform and so on.

All these processes seem more obviously to apply to pieces of widely-read analysis such as journalistic writings. However, one aspect of the inter-retroaction that is deducible from this chapter is that seemingly small processes of cause and effect, such as pieces written for the academic community or conclusions about a certain political situation reached by one individual, can have major and unpredictable consequences when fed in to the vast variety of interconnecting processes of causal processes underway at any one time. A small modification in one apparently insignificant interaction can be magnified in its importance as that modification affects another retroaction and that modification affects another and so on. This is a socio-political version of the now famous 'butterfly effect' - probably the best known aspect of chaos theory - which asserts that the beat of a butterfly's wing in a South American rainforest might cause a tornado in China (Gleick 1988). Of course, for such an effect to occur a huge variety of other variables reacting and interacting with the beat of the butterfly's wing must take place. In a socio-political version of complex inter-retroaction, we can state this in a similar although distinct fashion. One small event, such as the example given above of

a by-election in an obscure ward, may have effects beyond its apparent significance when it is viewed as one cause in the mass of causes that inter-retroact to produce any particular composite effect. This is a subtler and less sensational version of the butterfly effect: instead of stating that one apparently tiny factor can cause an apparently enormous event, it is arguing instead that no one factor, no matter how small or how large, can be understood as the cause of any effect without reference to its inter-retroaction with a vast number of other factors.

Furthermore, since linear causal models are in use primarily because they are so applicable to power-knowledge, even the most obscure piece of academic analysis will be structured according to the rules of simplification associated with that model. Hence such a piece of analysis will still have been fundamentally influenced by power-knowledge.

In addition to this, there is nothing to say that the consigning of a piece of work to obscurity is any less of a significant event than that which allows a work to achieve a wide readership. A relatively simple example that springs easily to mind in the context of this chapter is that of Nietzsche. His analysis came to play a major power-knowledge role in the context of Nazism. Is it not conceivable that this particular role would have been less likely had his work been subject to greater scrutiny and a more sensitive understanding prior to the rise of Hitler in that the ability of the fascists to misinterpret his work would have been less possible? Is it not similarly conceivable that the development of a sophisticated understanding of Nietzsche's works may have led the Nazis to regard the philosopher to be the enemy of their beliefs that he was rather than their supporter? Furthermore, the rejection of certain works has an inter-retroactive role in upholding the beliefs of those who have rejected the work and hence the analysis also has an effect in this sense upon the world being analysed (for a further exploration of this see Nash 1994; 1995)

These notions of power-knowledge are particularly useful as concepts for understanding why as analysts, and as actors in everyday life, we have a tendency to opt for a linear model of cause and effect that allows for a simpler understanding of the way our world is structured.

Power-knowledge implies that without a simple understanding of our world we would be unable to act, to exert power over others and our surroundings in the broadest sense. The complex inter-retroactive model implies an image of the world that is utterly diffuse, where every factor and every modification is both a cause and an effect of itself and of other factors and modifications; and where the effects of such causes are uncertain, unpredictable and in constant flux. We operate in this world but we cannot base our actions, our attempts to act as a cause, to exert power, on such a perception of the world - we would be paralysed. We must simplify to maintain sanity, to find some ground upon which we can base our actions - to be an actor with even the smallest part to play in a power-knowledge web, we must develop a model that allows us to understand our actions as originating in a certain set of fairly clear and limited causes and as resulting in a certain set of fairly clear and limited effects. If we were to account for all the complex and manifold causes and effects of our actions existing in an inter-retroactive model we would be paralysed by the fact that we could never find relatively simple, self-justifying reasons for action as we could not predict the full effects of our actions nor know in full its causes. The irony, one might say, of this condition is that while we do adopt a simple linear model for the sake of action, the actual complexity of the world ensures that this base is constantly proved invalid; because of complexity, we always get it wrong, at least in the long run. The issue raised for political analysis, and for that matter all other analysis, is that while such limited knowledge may be necessary in the everyday and instrumental world, it is not an adequate model if we wish to claim that we actually

*understand* or are on a road that ultimately leads to understanding. This is a view Nietzsche took and has written of with great clarity:

We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live - with the postulation of bodies, lines, surfaces, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content: without these articles of faith nobody could now endure to live! But that does not yet mean they are something proved and demonstrated. Life is not argument; among the conditions of life could be error (Nietzsche 1974: 177, section 121)

This is true not only of the grand technologies of control that are central to Foucault's first notion of power-knowledge but also to his second which implies that power-knowledge and hence simplicity and complexity are features of our everyday life and interactions with other humans.

To a large extent this link between power and knowledge in the form of simple causal models is a question of manipulation. If one has a certain goal in mind, if one wishes to manipulate the world in a certain way (i.e. to exert power) for whatever purposes, then it can become simple.

To quote George J. Klir:

... all would agree that the brain is complex and a bicycle simple (but) one also has to remember that to a butcher the brain of a sheep is simple while a bicycle, if studied exhaustively ... may present a very great quantity of significant material (Klir 1985: 83).



Morin makes a similar point asserting that complexity enters our analysis when we attempt to go beyond this manipulation and think more philosophically about the world:

There is what can be termed as the interest or need for useful simplifications, where we require clarity to isolate objects, and in that context, this is obviously a microphone, that is a table, this is a room, and so on. In that sense, our universe appears to be extremely simple, decomposable, analysable. In other words, every time we need to remove all ambiguity from the environment, our view of the universe becomes simple. But if your interest is the phenomenal world, the world in which we live, existentially, politically, socially, and anthropologically, there is no doubt that this world is one of complexity, where everything is in interaction, inter-retroaction, and interrelation, and it is then that we are forced to see it in a complex way ... (Morin 1985: 67).

Thus we can now appreciate that power and knowledge are inseparably linked one to the other. That, as analysts, we evade complexity by simplifying through the use of the linear cause and effect model. By this technique we involve ourselves in the web of power and knowledge, so as to provide the grounds upon which we can manipulate our environment.

For some political analysts such views are deeply disturbing. For many the maintenance of the principle of an absolute, discoverable truth which is simple enough to be fully comprehensible is a matter of the utmost importance. As was mentioned above, there are long-term trends that have encouraged the social sciences to regard themselves as imperfect natural sciences,

gradually working their way towards a near-total understanding. Ironically, it is in fact some scientists themselves who take a far more pragmatic view of truth and who would find the last few paragraphs totally unstartling. Applied scientists in particular usually recognise that they don't actually 'know' anything absolute or immutable about their subject and they don't particularly care, their simple goal is to provide a workable model which allows them to predict, cause and prevent certain occurrences. P.C.W. Davies has summarised the debate perfectly, he states that:

As science progresses, so some regularities become systematised as *laws*, or deductions from them ... (t)wo points of view can be detected among practising scientists regarding the ontological status of these laws. The first is that there exist "real" laws, or "the correct set" of laws, to which our current theories are only an approximation. As science progresses so we converge upon the "true" laws of the universe, which are regarded as eternal, timeless, and transcendent of the physical states. By contrast, some scientists deny that there are any "true" laws "out there", existing independently of scientific enquiry. What we call laws, they maintain are simply our attempts to cope with the world by ordering our experiences in a systematic way. The only laws are *our* laws, and they are to be judged solely on utilitarian grounds, i.e., they are neither true nor false, but merely more or less useful to us. My impression is that many scientists who practice what one might loosely call applied science incline to the latter philosophy, while those engaged in "fundamental" research, for example, on

quantum cosmology or the unification program, adopt the former position (1990: 62-63).

There is a strange inversion here. Applied scientists remain sceptical about notions of absolute truth, it is the grander theoretical scientists who cling to a belief in absolute reality but in social science the situation is somewhat reversed with those studying society in an applied, practical fashion through surveys and statistical analysis seeming convinced of their gradual apprehension of a true reality and those engaged in grander theoretical work who have become more circumspect about such a goal.

Based upon the above analysis we can now draw an important distinction between *understanding* an event and providing a workable and useful *explanation*. *Understanding* implies a total insight into the significance, meaning and mechanism of any particular process, the arguments developed above suggest that a full understanding of cause and effect requires a degree of complexity that may be beyond the tools we have employed to carry-out analysis; even more fundamentally, it may suggest that a full understanding in that sense is beyond human capabilities. The notion that we use a linear model of cause and effect to construct simple models of events and thus to place ourselves in a world characterised by power-knowledge suggests that we do not understand but, like the applied scientists in P.C.W. Davies' quote, provide a useful *explanation*, the actual truth of which is less important than the power it provides us with to manipulate our environment.

Such a distinction is far from new - Nietzsche made a similar observation<sup>7</sup> although he (or at least his translators) chose to use the terms *understanding* and *explanation* as synonymous while using *description* in place of my *explanation*; while the first term is apt, the term 'description' I feel underestimates the power implications of analysis and overestimates the extent to which simplification is based precisely on the failure to describe, in full, the complex occurrences of any process - in the context of this chapter therefore, the term *explanation* seems more appropriate. Nevertheless an extract from Nietzsche is worth quoting at length as these comments could stand in many ways as a summary to the preceding pages:

We call it 'explanation' (*understanding* -AL), but it is 'description' (*explanation* - AL) which distinguishes us from earlier stages of knowledge and science. We describe better - we explain just as little as any who came before us. We have revealed a plural succession where the naive man and investigator of earlier cultures saw only two things, 'cause' and 'effect' as they were called; we have perfected an image of how things become, but we have not got past an image or behind it. In every case the row of causes stands before us more completely; we conclude: this must first happen if this is to follow - but we have therewith *understood* nothing. Quality, in any chemical change for example, appears as it has always done as a 'miracle'; likewise all locomotion; no one has 'explained' thrust. How could we explain them! We operate with nothing but things which do not exist, with lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time, divisible space - how should

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<sup>7</sup>It may also be noticed that this distinction between 'understanding' and 'explanation' bears a resemblance to certain aspects of Heidegger's thoughts on art and technology; see, for example, Dreyfus 1993.

explanation even be possible when we first make everything into an *image*, into our own image! It is sufficient to regard science as the most fruitful possible humanization of things, we learn to describe ourselves more and more exactly by describing things and the succession of things (Nietzsche 1984: 61-62, section 34; Nietzsche 1974: 172, section 112 for alternative translation in full context).

This distinction between understanding and explanation will prove vital as we attempt to develop an analytical approach in response to the observations of this chapter. However, before we can undertake this development process we must first acknowledge the fact that both Nietzsche's comment above and the majority of the preceding paragraphs are replete with paradox. Such troubling features of any analysis should not go unmentioned especially as further investigation of such paradox can tell us something about the distinction between understanding and explanation itself.

## **THE PARADOXES OF COMPLEX INTER-RETROACTION**

Three paradoxes can be identified as arising out of this chapter. The first two are really aspects of the third and it is this third that provides a further argument for complexity whilst simultaneously defeating that argument and challenging all other forms of analysis.

The first paradox is the most straightforward: all the arguments used here in an attempt to prove the validity of a complex inter-retroactive model and disprove the validity of a linear model are themselves simplified linear models and hence flawed. To take just one example a linear cause and effect model is clearly being employed where I have stated above that the

ability of analysts to think retrospectively introduces an extra quantity of factors into the retroactive processes of cause and effect: retrospective thought acts as a cause which has the effect of introducing an extra quantity of factors. Like many paradoxes this one is self-reflexive for if the arguments for complex inter-retroaction are based upon a simple linear model and hence flawed then we can dismiss the validity of complex inter-retroactions but as a result the arguments can no longer be dismissed as simplifications, thus they immediately regain a certain value as arguments for complexity and so on ad infinitum.

The second paradox runs as follows: if the argument for a complex inter-retroactive model claims that all arguments are merely workable explanations rather than apprehensions or understandings of objective truth then the argument itself must logically be merely a workable explanation with no greater claim on truth than any other argument. This, of course, self-reflexively implies that it is objective and absolute (if we are to accept its own claim that it is merely a workable explanation as true) and hence it is a mere explanation once again; and, once again, so on ad infinitum.

These paradoxes, which seem both disturbing and laughable simultaneously, are part of a more fundamental paradox similar to Godel's Theorem which was developed in the field of mathematics. Douglas Hofstadter has made an attempt to translate Godel's Theorem from mathematical terms as:

This formula is unprovable within axiomatic system  $S$

(1985: 7)

where the formula refers to the sentence itself and it is assumed that the formula is based on the rules of the axiomatic system *S*. Hofstadter is understandably very wary of translating Godel's Theorem since such an act wrongly assumes that what holds in mathematical logic "should hold without modification in a completely different area" (Hofstadter 1979: 696). Furthermore, we can add that Godel's Theorem as translated here fails to communicate any of the paradox and self-reflexivity that is central to Godel's work. However, there is a way in which the study of complex causal processes throws up self-reflexive paradoxes that are very similar to Godel's theorem and seems to say something important about our study of politics.

The earlier paradoxes show that the assertion of complexity in the 'real world' cannot be proven on its own terms. Or to put it another way the methodological implications of complex inter-retroaction deny the validity of alternative methods and yet the 'valid' methodology suggested by the study of complexity cannot prove the existence of complexity itself (infuriatingly another self-reflexive paradox, or as Hofstadter calls them, another 'strange loop' raises its head here; for if complexity cannot be proven then the alternative methodologies are no longer invalid and can be used to prove complexity thus rendering them invalid once again and so on).

This might be the end of this matter if the paradox was relevant only for a study of complex inter-retroaction but it is not. The strange loop can be seen in all analyses, if they are looked at closely enough, precisely because we cannot be convinced of a particular argument's validity if it argues for itself on its own terms (which is of course the only logical way for it to argue) since it assumes that we already are convinced of the validity of those terms. A few examples should clarify this point.

Marxist analysis, for example, cannot prove its validity by arguing for such validity on the grounds that it represents the interests of the proletariat since this assumes we accept that the proletariat exists and that being representative of that proletariat's interest ensures validity - assertions we can only accept if convinced of the validity of the Marxist analysis, something which relies precisely on our acceptance of the existence etc. of the proletariat, an acceptance that can only be won if we are convinced of the validity of the Marxist analysis and so on. Many Marxists attempt to get around this dilemma by asserting that Marxism is correct because it is scientific (the best known modern proponent of this view being Louis Althusser 1969 although the notion is present in Marx's and Engel's own writings); this utterly evades the issue because there is nothing inherent in Marxist analysis which proves the methods of scientific enquiry to be valid, unless one asserts that scientific rationalism is proletarian which once again returns us to the initial dilemma. Marxists can only assert the validity of their approach by appealing to criteria outside their schema which thus challenges the validity of their schema.

But this particular paradox does not stop its destructive work there. Probably its most famous victim is the philosophical school of logical positivism which claimed that no assertion was meaningful unless it could be scientifically proven (presented famously by Ayer 1971). For example, it used this assertion to argue most stringently against any belief in God's existence. However it is clear that there can be no scientific proof (only philosophical) of the meaningfulness or validity of logical positivism and hence its particular assertions become meaningless and invalid. This returns us to the same strange loop applied to my own argument about complexity above that immediately allows logical positivism to become valid and invalid in turns.



Perhaps most destructively for Western culture there is the application of the theorem to science itself. Similar to logical positivism, there is a paradox at the heart of science for the validity of scientific method cannot be proven scientifically, no experiment can be constructed which can prove or even show that processes of observation and experimentation allow us to understand or access truth. Lyotard has paid particular attention to this aspect of paradox. In a sociological vein, he has argued that:

When a denotative statement is declared true, there is a presupposition that the axiomatic system within which it is decidable and demonstrable has already been formulated, that it is known to the interlocutors, and that they have accepted that it is formally satisfactory as possible... (The sciences) ... owe their status to the existence of a language whose rules of functioning cannot themselves be demonstrated but are the object of a consensus among experts (Lyotard 1984: 43).

This paradox also applies to less theoretically-driven methods of analysis. A seemingly straightforward, 'common sense' analysis of a particular event or process based upon a reading of broad historical, social and political factors (as one often finds in political biography and the work of British political analysts, e.g. Kavanagh 1987 and Hennessy 1990) still relies upon an implicit assertion that such a method is valid without being able to prove the validity of such a method using the same broad historical, social and political style of analysis for exactly the same reasons as those outlined above.

The same is true also for the linear cause and effect model just as it is for the inter-retroactive model. One cannot use either model to prove themselves since this assumes that we accept the

validity of the model in the first place and yet, as with Marxism and the other ideas outlined above, the use of one model to prove another model, e.g. using linear processes to prove the validity of inter-retroactive processes, simply introduces a logically unsustainable contradiction into any analysis. The proof of one model by another implies that the model used to prove the other is more valid and hence the proof becomes an argument about the validity, not of the substantive model, but of the model used to prove that substantive model.

Hence Godel's Theorem can be effectively translated into the sphere of socio-political analysis in the following form:

The assertions about the world, or about the approach required to understand it, produced using a certain method cannot be logically employed to prove the validity of that method.

An attempt to understand complex causal processes does, more than most other socio-political analyses, seem to bring this paradox into view. This is probably because, unlike most other analyses, it asserts that the world is incomprehensible (at least, for the present) which of course contradicts its attempts to comprehend the world as complex; other analyses *seem* more consistent because they inherently assert that the world is comprehensible by proceeding to comprehend it.

But these paradoxes, maybe coincidentally, also relate to complex processes on another level: such paradoxes are the very antithesis of simplicity and in that sense may be the very essence of complexity. If simplification is carried out for the sake of power-knowledge then these paradoxes defeat that goal every time. They appear to say nothing about our world that we

can use for the sake of manipulation or power and yet they are undeniably a form of knowledge. They use knowledge to dissolve the ground upon which we base our power-knowledge without suggesting anything with which to replace that ground. Godel's Theorem when translated into our particular discipline seems to suggest that everything we take to be logical, rational and grounded is really nothing more than a leap of faith.

My own feeling is that such observations have an exceptional, and as yet sadly ignored, power to challenge the way we think about our world and ourselves. In a limited way such paradox has run through Western thought although it often operates at its fringes - it clearly plays a role in Nietzsche and partly due to an interest in Nietzsche, it has appeared again in post-structuralist thinkers (see Lawson 1985 for an overview of this). Although I would suggest that it is in non-western modes of thought, especially the great tradition of Zen Buddhism where paradox has played a fundamental role for many centuries - a fact of which Douglas Hofstadter is keenly aware (1979, 1985: *passim*).

Maybe contemplation of paradox provides some way of appreciating complexity in all its fullness, maybe it presents the only way of obtaining knowledge without power: a type of closure that cannot be applied or communicated and hence cannot affect anyone but oneself, this at least seems to have certain parallels with Zen thought. Maybe, as a result, paradox provides a route to understanding rather than explanation.

However, whatever the implications of paradox they clearly point to a mode of thought that is well-beyond the structures of Western styles of analysis and communication and hence they will have limited implications for this thesis. As the following section makes clear the greatest implications for this particular study will be drawn from a non-paradoxical appreciation of

complexity, or more accurately an appreciation of complexity that deliberately ignores paradox. However, those paradoxes will maintain a presence by virtue of the fact that what follows will always keep a tactical eye on pushing the reader towards an acknowledgement of paradox and thus of the problems that the sense of complexity raises for us as analysts.

## **THE ANALYTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF COMPLEX INTER-RETROACTION**

Any analyst on the brink of writing a thesis is now faced by a dilemma which arises out of the question: how can the analyst respond to the implications and observation of complexity? To opt for an analysis that accepts itself solely to be explanation - once the distinction between explanation and understanding has been recognised - may be one possibility but it brings with it two serious problems.

Firstly, can the goal of explanation be considered motivation enough for the disciplines of the social sciences. As was mentioned above, a number of other disciplines have based much of their approach around 'explanation' and their ability to manipulate power-effects, specifically the applied sciences. However, while there clearly are power effects for the social sciences, they are rarely obvious or controllable. It seems highly unlikely that such uncertain outcomes could ever be adequate criteria for successful analysis. Despite the protestations of many contemporary theorists, the belief a higher understanding is constantly being achieved through academic analysis almost certainly still remains a powerful inspiration in the absence of any other more tangible criteria.

Secondly, the methods traditionally used by the social sciences have been designed specifically with the goal of 'understanding' in mind. A shift towards the acceptance of 'explanation', would mean a radical change in the methodology employed. Approaches based upon detached analysis and contemplation would no longer be appropriate. As in engineering, a very specific set of goals would have to be devised and methods of manipulation would have to be tested under a variety of conditions and variables until the most effective method was discovered. However, the value-oriented nature of the social sciences means that defining such goals in a narrow or acceptable manner is unlikely. While the enormous variety of human types, and the impressive complexity and unpredictability of human behaviour means that such a method is destined to failure. Of course, human history is replete with attempts at such social control and experimentation, the vast majority of which have failed whilst simultaneously causing intense misery. At the very least, a social science based purely upon 'explanation' risks becoming disingenuous; its resonance as a piece of analysis resides precisely in the fact that it will still be read as understanding - such an option thus runs the risk of maintaining the facade of portraying power-knowledge simplifications as universal insight.

Apart from these two problems, one might also acknowledge that opting for pure 'explanation' would require an extinguishing of imagination and adventure; when the iconoclastic promise of paradox and complexity have been accepted as valid possibilities, then surely only the most instrumental mind should wish to remain in the suburban climate of 'explanation'.

Thus the other obvious option is to strike out uncompromisingly towards understanding, possibly with paradox as the starting-point. This seems the more valid, more honest, more exciting option. It may even constitute some form of progress, a genuine continuation of the

Enlightenment project, if such notions can remain intact once paradox and complexity are seriously contemplated. However, for this option to be pursued most fully would require ditching traditional structures and modes of Western analysis almost immediately which would leave the analyst without the various personal benefits obtained by remaining within those structures and modes. It would also mean the development of an analysis that would be unrecognisable by most as worthy analysis. If we observe the example of an analytical project that seems to have concentrated most fully on the appreciation of understanding as paradox and complexity, Zen Buddhism, we immediately see that its traditions of meditation, oral instruction and learning through the adoption of various ways of behaving are completely anathema to the traditions of Western academic analysis. The option runs the risk of alienating before it even begins to encourage others to join such a project.

Thus an analyst - who is either on the brink of writing or who still cares for convincing their fellow analyst - can opt wholeheartedly for neither explanation nor understanding. Instead s/he can only adopt a tactical approach: an approach that errs on the side of explanation and yet contains within it a subversive element that pushes both reader and analyst towards a recognition that this is not the whole story. The analyst must undertake an almost literary task. S/he must aim to provide not just arguments about a particular topic but also a *sense* of complexity, a feeling that there is more to the subject under analysis than can be communicated. This *sense* should ultimately provide the reader with a realisation that full complexity has been evaded and thus that another approach must ultimately be adopted if the subject under study is to be genuinely understood. This can in large part be done by attempting to communicate complexity through explanation - a project which if undertaken honestly will always fail and leave both analyst and reader searching for other routes, which would prove more radical but also more fruitful in the search for understanding. The

following paragraphs thus show in the briefest and most abstract fashion how such an attempt can be launched although, as is also shown below, less subtle and elegant methods may be required to maintain the tactical integrity of the project.

The first method we can use to *explain complexity* is that of identifying multi-causal and multi-effectual processes. Taking this chapter's analysis at face-value we can apply a simple rule of thumb: the analyst must emphatically indicate that every cause has a multiplicity of effects and that every effect has a multiplicity of causes. No prime cause, series of causes or process should be identified.

In addition to this we can also identify processes of retroaction and inter-retroaction between these multi-causal/effectual processes. Of course, it would be impossible, not to say tedious, to attempt to display all the inter-retroactive processes underway in any subject chosen for analysis. Thus we will have to settle for the identification of only a few, maybe only the 'grandest', the most all-encompassing, of inter-retroactions in order to provide that 'sense' of complexity.

However, we can adopt the method of 'implication' to deal with the conflict between the constraints of the thesis structure and the methodological demands of the complexities of inter-retroaction. In 'implication' we employ concepts which can imply the processes of inter-retroaction without actually requiring an endlessly detailed, full appreciation of the process itself. Such concepts are, of course, simplifications and one must be wary of taking them at face-value. They should be read as shorthand for an enormously complex process; they are insinuations of quantitatively and qualitatively distinct events. In this sense concepts designed as 'implications' are just one more tactic in the subversion of simplicity. Two such concepts are

those of 'articulation' and 'negative identity construction' as employed by the theorists Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (1985; 1990; 1994).

At least initially, Laclau and Mouffe develop these notions in response to their rejection of the notion of socio-economic necessity as a determinant of identity as found in Marxism. Instead they argue that any particular identity results from a totally contingent combination of already-existing identities or aspects of identities. This combination they describe as 'articulation' and define more specifically as:

... any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 105)

However, in addition to this, Laclau and Mouffe believe that the construction of an identity based upon articulation is only possible when it is in

confrontation with other articulatory practices of an antagonistic character (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 114).

Because there can be no immanent logic of necessity to the process of articulation, then the motor of that process can only be that an existing identity is under threat from a 'constitutive outside' (Laclau 1990: 9; *passim*), an external antagonistic force. Laclau and Mouffe illustrate this point by quoting the French revolutionary leader Saint-Just:



What constitutes the identity of the Republic is the total destruction of what is opposed to it (Saint-Just quoted in Laclau & Mouffe 1990: 21).

Laclau and Mouffe make much of these relatively straightforward concepts. It is not difficult to grasp the idea that group's coalesce when challenged from without and form identities by splitting and combining existing beliefs and meanings within the context of such a challenge. Although the notion that what constitutes the outside of a group is itself a product of other articulations and identities forged by other outsides, is itself somewhat more challenging. However, while these observations present a particularly dynamic framework for the study of a period in Labour's history when there were many shifting factions and identities taking an active role in the Party's transformation, Laclau and Mouffe's ideas of articulation and negative identity construction are more particularly useful as concepts within a tactical approach to complexity because they both imply the constant process of symbiotic modification and remodification characteristic of inter-retroaction. Just as one factor in an inter-retroactive relationship is a constantly modified modifier of other factors, so the identity of any element in a process of articulation or negative construction with another can only be understood as part of that process of constant interaction with the other element. As the Saint-Just quote powerfully demonstrates above, for Laclau and Mouffe an identity is so closely bound-up in a causal process with its 'outside' that its very constitution is predicated on the destruction of that 'outside'. An act, of course, which if achieved - partially or fully - would radically alter or even dissolve the initial identity.

In this sense, by using the concepts of articulation and negative identity construction in our analysis we can imply the complexity that is occurring 'beneath the surface' of elements that may appear as static for the sake of our remaining within the structures of a thesis based upon

modes of Western analysis. As such notions of articulation and negative identity construction will be employed widely in the ensuing analysis of Labour's transformation.

We can also apply the tactic of implication of vast numbers of unrecognised complex inter-retroactions to the specific categories we use to describe aspects of the Labour Party. These 'fuzzy categories' (to adapt a term popular in systems theory) are of use not because of their precision in pinpointing a specific feature (as one would expect of a traditional category) but because they hint at a wide breadth of unexplored causal processes across time and space. In the context of the Labour Party and this thesis, the 'fuzzy' category that is employed is that of '*value*' (as this word is commonly used in English in a number of different contexts and with many subtle meanings, it shall be italicised in this thesis when used to refer to the particular concept outlined in more detail in chapter three). This is a term which incorporates a range of beliefs and principles stretching across the whole structure and membership of the Labour Party. By its very nature both the content and location of *value* is uncertain, insinuating processes we do not fully acknowledge. The full significance and 'meaning' of '*value*' is dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

In the above methods alone we can observe the tactical at work, for any reader should be able to see that while such methods immediately do introduce a greater complexity into our analysis, they are clearly methods that cannot be applied in full and hence their use provides a sense to the reader of that evaded complexity; it suggests a greater degree of multi-causality, multi-effectuality and inter-retroaction that, if it is to be appreciated, requires other tools, other structures.

A further method we might choose is that of 'multiplication'. This can best be characterised as an irrepressible wish, on the part of the analyst aiming for complexity, to multiply any category with which s/he works. The observation that any causal process only implies a multitude of other causes and effects when we attempt to understand the mechanism of the process itself, can in part be represented by questioning the categories which allow for temporal and spatial limitations.

For example, this thesis will attempt to show that to explain the transformation of the Labour Party in the 1980s, one cannot work simply with one spectrum of belief, e.g. the traditional left-right spectrum. One must multiply the transections of the Party to incorporate such issues as ethnicity, age, individual policy disputes, different approaches to campaigning strategy, responses to specific events etc.

The tactical aspect of all the above methods is implicit in their application: they do introduce a greater complexity into political explanation but by attempting to do so they fail because complexity and explanation are incommensurable, the latter is premised upon simplicity. But this failure is itself a step towards understanding for it introduces a dissatisfaction and, if placed in its context, can encourage both analyst and reader to search elsewhere, to look to those margins of his or her perception. However, there is one more method which is blatantly tactical and the least subtle of these approaches. It constitutes a 'belt and braces' approach for it is too easy to ignore the complex implications of the above methods and assume that we are simply working towards a fuller objective understanding by using those tactics. Hence we must also introduce the basic method of acknowledging simplicity where it occurs in the text. As such, this thesis includes a concluding chapter designed to do just this, to show some of the points where complexity has been evaded, to highlight the contradictions implicit in an

attempt to explain complexity rather than understand it, and to reiterate and explore further the paradoxes that lace this and all analyses.

These are the bare bones of a response to complex causal processes. The following chapter attempts to place some practical muscle on the methods briefly identified above by applying them to a very specific area of political research, namely the transformation of the Labour Party between 1983 and 1989.

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## **COMPLEXITY AND ANALYSIS OF LABOUR IN THE 1980s**

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This chapter serves three purposes. Firstly, it will provide an overview of the existing literature on Labour's transformation in the 1980s. Most specifically it will outline the main causes, identified by political analysts, of the changes in the Party. Alongside this, the chapter will also highlight those causes identified as responsible for the nature of that change, i.e. the factors which ensured that the transformation took the form that it did. There will also be a brief focus upon other broader explanations of change within the Labour Party which may not deal exclusively or at all with the 1980s. This will place analysis of that period in its academic context as well as drawing on a broader area of work thus informing the second aim of this chapter which is to develop some guides for a new approach to explaining change in the Party which will, of course, be based very heavily on the ideas outlined in the last chapter. Thirdly, the review below will also serve a critical function in that it will show how existing literature has tended to rely on a very limited set of causal processes to explain the transformation of the Party. This reliance, of course, places these works firmly within the context of the simplification in analysis with which this thesis, through its emphasis upon complexity, is trying to break.

## LABOUR'S TRANSFORMATION OF THE 1980s: EXISTING EXPLANATIONS

### **A Rational Response to Electoral Loss: Modernisation and Professionalisation**

A number of arguments have been developed about the causes of the changes of the 1980s and the reasons why the changes took the form they did. The first, and most common, is that the changes were a rational response to the electoral defeats of 1979 and 1983, with an extra boost to change coming with the defeat of 1987; in essence the changes are portrayed as a rational calculation designed to win more votes. For example Shaw states that

(t)he soft left was profoundly shaken by the electoral trauma of 1983.

They drew the lesson that the Party 'needs unity and cannot afford another period of extreme polarisation'. Labour, the argument ran, could only survive as a credible electoral force if it remained a broad coalition encompassing right as well as left. This implied reaching a *modus vivendi* with the right, a willingness to debate and settle differences in a sober and restrained manner (Shaw 1988: 260).

In a later work Shaw repeated the point that this "growing disposition to compromise and swallow unpalatable leadership decisions if this facilitated victory at the polls" was

the most potent factor explaining the altered mood in the Party (1994:

166).

Marquand emphasises the rationalism of the change more bluntly, writing that

a lot of people in the Labour Party very much wanted to be in power ...  
and most of them had the good sense to see that if they were to get  
into power the Party would have to say the sorts of things voters want  
to hear (1991: 193-194).

Similar or identical points are made by Hughes and Wintour (1990: 3; 40), Minkin (1991: 624), Smith (1992a: 8; 12), Keohane (1993: 163), and Seyd (1993: 74).

However, rational calculation for vote-winning alone is not enough to explain the actual content of the changes themselves: how one wins those votes is always far from clear and as the following chapters will show different strategies were on offer from the early eighties onwards. However, the inspiration for the new policies and the new 'mood' (as Shaw calls it) adopted by the Party has been identified as the result of one main process: Labour's attempt to win more votes by changing their policies and their image in line with the new demands of the electorate. As such the 'rational response' analysis forms the predicate of the notion that the changes in the Party were largely the result of a drive for a modernisation of the Party's policies and structures and a professionalisation of its campaigning techniques and organisation.

The prime source for discovering what these new demands of the electorate were and how to respond to them - and thus also the prime source of the modernisation and professionalisation process - is often identified as the research and ideas of the new media-oriented officials of the

Party symbolised by Peter Mandelson and his close relationship to the Shadow Communications Agency. Hughes and Wintour (1990) highlight the influential role of these personnel more emphatically than any other analyst of this period. They are regarded as the origin of the new campaigning style including the red rose emblem (51-59), the testing ground for the proposals of the Policy Review (51), and the source of a report which, if Hughes and Wintour are to be believed, played the main role in convincing members of the Shadow Cabinet and the NEC that change had to occur. This report was *Labour and Britain in the 1990s*. It was based on survey research and displayed that Labour had a poor image amongst the electorate although one might have thought that three disastrous election losses was evidence enough. Nevertheless, Hughes and Wintour state that the presentation of *Labour and Britain in the 1990s*

exploded on some of those present like a grenade; in the minds of others it smouldered away on a slow-burning fuse (49).

The authors go on to state that

(t)hat session alone would make the influence of the shadow agency on the development of the (policy) review inestimably strong (49).

Shaw (1994) also identifies the role of this personnel as an important cause of change and of the nature of that change but he takes a somewhat more sophisticated line arguing that this influence took the form of a 'new strategic thinking', the influence of which lay in



the clarity of its conceptions, its internal coherence, the experience and quality of its exponents and the proven commercial effectiveness of its methods (156).

These characteristics, which in essence amount to the rationalistic appeal of this new thinking, ensured that

(i) it became the driving force behind Labour's transformation as it emerged as the yardstick against which all initiatives, strategic, programmatic and organisational, were judged (156).

Shaw asserts that this new strategic thinking had five main components: a model of electoral behaviour that saw voting as the outcome of party and leadership image and policy preferences; an attempt to appeal to more affluent groups in Labour's natural constituency; an attempt to control the political agenda by shifting debate to issues that were seen as Labour's strengths; an attempt to secure as much TV exposure as possible; and the use of advertising techniques in campaigning (156-158).

This rationalistic line of argument has undoubtedly been the most influential and readily accepted in analysis of Labour's transformation both in academic and journalistic circles.

### **Ideological Influences: Revisionism, Thatcherism and English Political Culture**

However, alternative sources of inspiration for the changes have also been identified. Smith has portrayed Labour's ideological and policy direction in the 1980s as in part a return to the

Party's revisionist tradition following the radicalism of the early 1980s (1992b: 26; 1994: 711; 713). Smith argues that in terms of principles, the Policy Review and revisionism are similar primarily because of their shared scepticism towards nationalisation and economic planning and their shared commitment to economic growth. However, he also makes clear that the Policy Review and other changes in the Party's doctrine and ideology also have their differences from the revisionist strand. In highlighting these differences Smith seems to suggest that Labour's transformation was as much a response to past governmental failures as the electoral defeats of the 1980s. He states:

... the Policy Review was also an attempt to fill the vacuum which resulted from the failure of both the revisionist social democracy that dominated the Party from the 1950s through to the 1970s and left-wing socialism that became increasingly dominant between 1973 and 1983 (1992b: 16).

As a result of these failures, Labour's policy and ideology of the 1980s differs from revisionism in a number of ways: it is less committed to Keynesianism, it admits that full employment is less likely and it accepts limits to public spending. For Smith this means that

Labour has developed a revisionism that recognises the reality of capitalism but that has little of the vision and radicalism of the 1950s revisionism. It has accepted one half of the revisionist equation - capitalism - but not the second half - radicalism for social justice ... The Party has eliminated many policies of the left but failed, so far, to develop an alternative radicalism (1992b: 27).

Smith's analysis was in part a response (Smith 1992b: 23-26; 1994: *passim*) to the common suggestions from the left of the Party that Labour's changes in the 1980s were a capitulation or adaptation to Thatcherism. Hay, for example, has argued that Thatcherism altered the electorate's "predominant perceptions of the political context" towards its own principles which has encouraged the Labour Party simply to accommodate the electorate's new preferences rather than shape them (1994: 705).

Smith's argument is certainly the subtler recognising as it does no single ideological source such as Thatcherism for the changes in the Party and asserting convincingly that such over-simplifications provide

a normative condemnation rather than a contextualised explanation  
(1994: 709).

Rather strangely though Smith takes another Labour analyst, Gregory Elliott, to task for perpetrating an over-simplification about Thatcherism akin to Hay's. However, Elliott (1993) has an analysis of Labour's ideological development that bears more than a passing resemblance to Smith's although there are clearly no direct lines of influence. Elliott, like Smith, sees the changes of the 1980s as a continuation of Labour's historically non-radical ideological traditions, for the Party in his view

is not now - and never has been - a socialist party. Throughout its history it has comprised a coalition of *social reformers* and reformist socialists, the latter in a permanent minority (Elliott 1993: xi).

Also in common with Smith, Elliott sees Labour's ideology of the 1980s and since as a set of beliefs inspired by this non-radical past but not merely a repetition of it. Just as Smith portrays a type of post-revisionism for Labour in the 1980s, so Elliott - stretching the point somewhat further although still along the same lines - argues that the Labour Party is "in transition to a *post-social-democratic* posture" which he seems to say is a form of "social liberalism" favoured by continental leaders such as Mitterand, Palme, Kreisky and Brandt (xii; 17).

The difference between Smith and Elliott exists in the identification of the reasons for the potency of these ideological factors on the changes of the 1980s. Smith does not explain at any length why a limited version of revisionism should have come to have such a great influence although it seems to be suggested that such ideas matched-up to the demands of the electorate and the economic realities of the 1980s (see below). Elliott, on the other hand, inspired by Anderson (Elliott 1993: xvi) relies on the influence of England's uniquely deferential and compromise-driven socio-political culture to explain the potency of moderate beliefs. For Elliott, Labour's crisis and unimaginative adaptations of the 1980s were a result of its failure to challenge Britain's imperialist culture (125 -126). This weakness allowed Thatcherism to succeed at the expense of Labour by playing upon the same unchallenged imperialist themes, while the Party's political unitarianism inspired by the same imperialism "imprison(ed) two Labour nations - Scotland and Wales - in the one-party state of a United Kingdom dominated by the south-east" (125):

Labour remained the captive of a political culture into whose governing assumptions it had socialised its own electorate - a hitherto captive audience many of whose English contingent now attended to other

'tunes of glory' and grew dependent upon another variety of Nanny State (126).

Obviously, Elliott's views take us to some extent away from an argument that sees Labour's changes as primarily a rational calculation - in line with the writers who have clearly inspired him, such as Coates (1975), Nairn (1978) and Anderson (1992) there seem to be other, deeper institutional and ideological processes at work in Elliott (see below) but he does provide a possible process whereby the historical tradition of revisionism and the plausibly rational calculations of the 1980s may have been linked.

### **The Realignment**

Another extremely common argument that explains the reasons for the changes, and more specifically explains why Kinnock was able to win these changes so successfully, asserts that a split occurred on the radical left of the Party which dominated the movement in the early 1980s creating two distinct groups: the soft left and the hard left. This split is usually regarded as the result of the Benn deputy leadership challenge in 1981, the 1983 election, the defeat of the Miners' Strike, the collapse of the rates rebellion, and disagreement over how to respond to Kinnock's decision to attack Militant. This split led to an alliance on the NEC, in the PLP, and at conference between the soft left and the right of the Party which isolated the hard left and provided Kinnock with a power base for change.

For example, Hughes and Wintour argue that the "primary achievement" of Kinnock's early leadership was to encourage that alliance which then isolated the hard left and created a new "centrist unity" in the party (1990: 9). Similarly Smith comments that

The separation between the 'soft' left and 'hard' left enabled Kinnock to build support on both sides of the Party whilst isolating the hard left. With support of the centre left and centre right Kinnock secured control of the Party's three power centres - the PLP, the NEC and the conference (...). This gave the leader the base to make the Party electable once again (1992a: 9).

Shaw (1988: xi; 1994: 161-162) and Jeffrey (1993: 115-126) along with numerous contemporary journalistic analyses (see chapter five) make similar points.

Other points have been made by analysts about the cause of change which can be seen as elucidations of specific aspects of this grand alliance. Smith argues that the left could only stay together while they had the right to battle against as in the early 1980s (1992a: 8), a factor, it is implied, that was removed after Kinnock's election. While Heffernan and Marqusee argue that Kinnock's strength resided, in part, in the fact that the hard left could not challenge him due to defeats and defections (1992: 93). Marquand also argues that one of Kinnock's central objectives was to defeat the left by splitting it (1991: 201).

Seyd (1987) in particular has focused upon the hard left aspect of this argument asserting that splits and decline on the hard left were due to a variety of factors including the labour left's "social isolation" (172) from the mainstream of Party membership; an over-reliance upon powerful personalities; an over-emphasis upon organising activists rather than convincing members and voters (172-179); and "ideological uncertainty, programmatic weaknesses, and strategic myopia" (175).

Arguments such as these which analyse the trajectory of the Party in terms of contingent alliances and splits between various factions are not exclusive to the 1980s. At certain points it has even been elevated to the level of a general rule. Beer, for example, sees the Labour Party as little more than a collection of such groups, the existence of which even reduces the importance of socialism as a common goal:

(T)he Labour Party (is) a coalition that includes various groups, such as trade unions and reformers with special concerns, each component group aiming at its particular goal. In this coalition, the "socialists" are nothing more than one member ... (T)here is some overlapping of goals, the miners, for instance, wanting the benefits that come to miners in a Socialist society, although perhaps less urgently than more immediate improvements in their conditions of life and work. Except for this overlapping, each group has different goals and it is ... denied that the party entertains a distinctive common purpose (Beer 1982: 107).

Samuel and Stedman-Jones have portrayed the Labour Party as similarly made-up of competing factions and groups although they condemn suggestions that such battles are specific to the internal politics of the Party. They are keen to show that the Party has always had multiple links to external groups and that these links have had a fundamental influence on the nature of the internal tensions. They state that

... the history of Labour Party politics might be looked at, not as that of a self-sufficient organisational or ideological entity, but rather of a perpetually shifting fulcrum between contending and initially extra-party pressures from left and right (Samuel & Stedman-Jones 1982: 327).

Analyses which concentrate on the Party in the 1970s and early 1980s unsurprisingly identify such factional causes as central. Seyd (1987: 37-75) identifies the increased power and numbers of the labour left-leaning rank and file as one of the prime causes behind Labour's radicalisation in this period; while Keohane sees the Party's defence policy in the early eighties as an attempt to reconcile the peace movement with right-wing groups in the Party that favoured nuclear and NATO reliance (1993: 161). Kogan and Kogan (1982: 11-16; *passim*) emphasise this cause more strongly than any other stating that

(i) it is to the work of these groups (of the radical left) that we can credit many of the recent spectacular happenings ... comparatively small numbers of barely known, mostly young party activists have wrought changes that may have a momentous effect on the future of British politics, and may herald the end of the Labour Party as we know it (1982: 11).

### **Centralisation and Authoritarianism**

Another important cause of change which has been identified is the growing centralisation and authoritarianism of the Party leadership. This is linked to the above emphasis on the soft left-



right alliance and has been developed most fully by Heffernan and Marqusee (1992) who assert that Kinnock

gradually concentrated all power in his own office, which by the end of his regime had supplanted the authority of virtually every other Party body, including the PLP itself (43).

Clearly such a concentration of power would leave Kinnock free to implement whichever reforms he personally favoured. For Heffernan and Marqusee, the ability of Kinnock to concentrate power so effectively has a number of origins. Firstly, Kinnock's commitment to reform meant that he won the powerful backing of the media and the establishment (1992: 16; 25; 56). Secondly, the weakness of the trades unions resulting from the Miners' Strike defeat and the attacks of the Government, meant that there was no alternative pole of power controlling the Party (61). And thirdly, the careerism of the soft left ensured that they backed whoever held the power of patronage in the Party. This careerism also weakened the hard left, the only pole of opposition to Kinnock's centralising tendencies, in the form of defections by the personally ambitious to Kinnock's camp (23; *passim*).

Shaw also recognises the role of centralisation (1988: 254-302; 1994: 108-117; see also Minkin 1991: 622-623) in making it easier for Kinnock to reform the Party in the way he wished. But, in a less polemical vein than Heffernan and Marqusee, he identifies the constant attempts by the media to portray Labour as split and/or as a Party in crisis as the main cause for the tendency towards centralisation (1994: 114; 117). He is also keen to argue, at least in his earlier book, that the process of enhancing central control was "a slow, halting and uneven one" (1988: 255).

Elsewhere analysts have recognised centralisation in more ad hoc forms. Hughes and Wintour state that various Party officials and members of Kinnock's office did "contrive to direct the (policy) review" (1990: 166) while Seyd proposes a view, shared by many of those active in the Party (see chapter nine), stating that

(t)he ideas and proposals contained within the Policy Review came from the top ... there had been very little attempt to gauge opinion at the grassroots. A "Labour Listens" exercise ... was more of a public relations exercise than a serious attempt to sound out opinions (1993: 82).

### **Personal Leadership**

Another central argument about the cause of change in the Party is one that links the nature and success of the reforms directly to the personal qualities or influence of the leading figures in the Party. The clearest use of this personal element occurs in Hughes and Wintour's (1990) analysis. For them part of the success of the Kinnockite project was due to the skill, foresight and will-power of those in leadership positions. Throughout their text they place various figures, their personalities, and their relationships with each other at the heart of the explanation for why and how the Party changed so radically in the 1980s. They state that

For all his faults and shortcomings, Neil Kinnock created the new model party. The Policy Review was his construct. He believed profoundly that Labour had strayed too far from the people. For him,

the review was a way of leading his party back to its proper place in British life (204).

As this quote suggests, Hughes and Wintour along with many contemporary analysts (of which they were two, writing respectively for *The Independent* and *The Guardian* in the 1980s) often point to Kinnock's talent for Party management as one of the reasons for the success of his reforming project. They indicate, for example, how his failure to win the 1984 conference vote for his proposals on One Member, One Vote taught him never to attempt any reform without having first won powerful backing from the most important sectors of the Party (1990: 7-8). In a similar vein, Minkin suggests that the Kinnock leadership had a

prudent respect for the build-up of consistent Conference majorities (1991: 623).

Hughes and Wintour also explain the origin and efficacy of the soft left-right alliance as being the result of the foresight and "understanding" that existed between Tom Sawyer, Michael Meacher, David Blunkett and Kinnock (9). And as has been mentioned above they argue that the outcome of the Policy Review was to a certain degree the result of co-ordination by a few leading individuals (166).

Jeffrey also identifies the personal causes of change stating that Kinnock was "most determined of all to win" and that "few have moulded the Party so completely in their image" (1993: 127) and elsewhere that

Kinnock's popularity was based on various factors: his working-class origins as the son of a Welsh miner, his forceful and outgoing personality, and above all his left-wing credentials (1993: 115).

Smith takes up Jeffrey's last point arguing, in common with many contemporary commentators, that the combination of Hattersley's right-wing and Kinnock's left-wing allegiances enhanced their power and encouraged the growth of the soft left-right alliance mentioned above (1992a: 8-9).

Marquand (1991) has also identified the role of the leader's personality in the achievement of change. Applying Drucker's notion of 'ethos' (see below) Marquand argues that in the case of Kinnock, unlike many of the Party's previous leaders, "Labour's ethos is also his ethos":

He is unmistakably and unaffectedly a product of the working-class culture of the South Wales valleys, with all the strengths and weaknesses that that implies. The language of 'our people', which can so easily sound false or patronising, comes naturally to him because they really are his people (1991: 206).

### **The Political and Economic Climate**

Two less pervasive arguments include the assertion that the changes were a rational response not directly to the demands of the electorate but to the changing political and economic climate of Britain during the 1980s. Shaw (1994: 154-156) asserts that Labour's attempts to win the confidence of the City through policy moderation and public relations exercises were

a response to the internationalisation of capital and the recognition on the part of the Party's leaders that political power no longer gave national leaders inevitable control over a country's finances.

Smith has made the same point but has also hinted at the role of an evolving political agenda in causing reform asserting that

(p)erhaps the most substantial changes in policy have occurred in the area of what might be called the new agenda: the social quality of life issues that relate to post-material values (...). Environmental policy, women's policy and constitutional reform have all changed markedly ... (1992c: 219).

The other less pervasive argument is that Thatcher's success in implementing her policies played a major role in enabling the dominance of Kinnock. Smith makes this point (1992b: 28) although it is asserted most strongly by Marquand:

The union leaders, harassed by Thatcherite legislation and haunted by declining membership, now needed Kinnock more than he needed them. In a sense which had not been true since the mid-1950s, their block votes were once again the heavy artillery of the party leader. With this queen of the battlefield at his command, Kinnock was able to scatter his enemies on the far left, to jettison the last vestiges of the neo-socialism of the late 1970s and early 1980s and to dominate the conference ... It was a remarkable achievement ... (b)ut he could not

have done it if Mrs. Thatcher had not given him the chance (1991: 196-197).

Marquand also mentions here another possible cause of Kinnock's success, the consistent support he won from a majority of the trades unions' block votes, a feature that is only given a detailed attention by Minkin (1991). However, Minkin is particularly keen to explore the complexities of the relationship between the leadership and the unions rather than assert a simple causal process.

It should be stated that the specific claims about Labour's transformation in the 1980s made by the works mentioned above all contain a degree of detail, integral to the grander arguments, but which could not possibly be covered in full here. These specifics will be subject to a more rigorous assessment at relevant points in the following chapters. At this point our main concern must be with drawing on the form and general ideas outlined above in order to develop the complex methods of explanation.

## **COMPLEXITY AND THE EXISTING ANALYSES OF LABOUR'S TRANSFORMATION: A CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT**

This section will critically analyse the concepts and explanatory frameworks underpinning existing interpretations of Labour's transformation as outlined above. Five major criticisms can be identified based upon the exposition on complexity in the preceding chapter.

The first thing that will strike an analyst committed to complexity about the above analyses is their simplicity and rigidity. Although each author has tended to draw upon a series of causes

to explain Labour's changes, the series is often limited in number. Furthermore, there is a very strong tendency to regard these causes either as part of one larger causal process or to emphasise one causal process over all others. These tendencies usually take the form of a limited narrative or argument. As such, in Hughes and Wintour, Marquand, Smith, and Hay, the rationalism of the decision to obtain more votes through reform and this rationalism's mediation through the 'realignment' is emphasised. While in Heffernan and Marqusee, the authoritarianism and centralisation of Kinnock's office mediated through the careerism of the soft left is placed in a primary position. And in Elliott, the transformation is understood as part of the larger story of 'English exceptionalism'. Only Shaw seems to avoid promoting one cause to a prime position - more about his approach below.

Thus we see in the existing analyses a clear example of the will to simplification outlined in the previous chapter. Analysts of Labour's transformation have been keener to 'explain' rather than 'understand' that transformation. As such, a huge variety of causes involved in the changes of the 1980s are ordered into one predominant causal process, governed usually by one epiphenomenal factor such as rationalism, the drive to modernisation or authoritarian impulses on the part of the leadership.

A second criticism follows on from the first. This is that the existing analyses fail to deal with, in any sustained fashion, the interaction of different causal processes, and almost totally ignore any notion that there may be a complex *inter-retroaction* between these causal processes.

However, different causal processes must be combined because, as the last chapter suggests, any close inspection of them tends to imply infinite numbers of other causal processes; it only

seems fair therefore to suppose that the limited number of causal processes identified by analysts of the 1980s will be included in their number. For example, once one asks how a rational calculation creates the effect of adopting moderate policies, we are left with a series of answers - such as the assessment of the popularity of such policies, a belief that radical policies were no longer economically feasible, factional support for change etc. - which imply other causal processes based not on rationalism but on other factors such as electoralism, other ideological considerations and the internal balance of power.

It is also far from clear that personal and rational causes such as careerism or vote-maximisation can be completely excluded from analyses that emphasise 'deep' ideological and institutional origins. At first it might seem that the institutional and ideological involves the explanation of movement from cause to effect within itself. A cause such as parliamentarianism affects the leadership in a certain way because it imposes institutional and ideological constraints on their behaviour. However this process can only be understood if we implicitly assume that certain personal and rational elements are playing a part in the transmission of this cause into an effect. For example, a Labour leader who decides to espouse a moderate policy to avoid upsetting the traditions of Parliament and to maintain Labour's electoral credibility is clearly making a rational calculation about what is good for Labour and about the centrality of Parliament. Similarly that leader may also be exhibiting certain personal traits such as a willingness to conform or an authoritarian attitude to his/her more radical detractors within the Party. It may also imply certain political elements such as the weakness or strength of certain coalitions or factions in the Party which might be ready to support or oppose the decisions of the leader. The latter is particularly true of the late 1970s and early 1980s, clearly the more radical stance of many leadership figures in that period was in part the effect of changes in the strengths of certain groups in the Party.



Only Eric Shaw (1994) has attempted a combination of causal processes. He has criticised those analyses of Labour in the 1980s that see the prime cause of change as a rational response to environmental and social forces in order to win votes (Smith 1992abc; 1994; Hughes and Wintour 1990). He states that

... the extent to which the implications of these (environmental and social) forces were self-evident and hence predetermined the Party's response, varied to a considerable degree, whilst the precise conclusions its leadership drew were always mediated by its frame of reference (1994: 152-3).

As such, Shaw develops an approach that attempts to understand Labour's changes as the interaction between external environmental factors, the leadership's frame of reference and internal party considerations. This response is instructive and useful. Instead of rejecting analyses based upon rational calculation out of hand, Shaw attempts to construct an approach that allows different, apparently contradictory approaches to interact and synthesise and thus provide a more complex and subtler analysis.

It is clear from the above that the effective impact of institutional and ideological causes cannot be understood without reference to other causes just as those causes cannot be understood without reference to the institutional and ideological themselves. This suggests that one way of applying a multi-causal/effectual method to study of the Labour Party in the 1980s is to always take account of rational, internal political, personal, institutional and ideological causes and effects when explaining any particular change.

A third criticism of the current literature is that it often presents policy as the ultimate effect and gauge of change within the Party. This is particularly the case with reference to analysis of the Policy Review. The Review plays a strange epiphenomenal role in analysis of Labour's transformation. Unlike most epiphenomenal explanations where the phenomena causing the epiphenomena is usually the prime focus of interest (e.g. economic contradictions in Marxism), in Labour Party analysis, policy reform and the Review are the focus despite clearly being regarded as the epiphenomena which has been 'caused' by other factors. In effect the Policy Review has become 'The Transformation' caused by factors of less interest or significance (see above)<sup>6</sup>. This is particularly the case in Smith (1994) and Hay (1994) who concentrate almost entirely upon doctrinal pronouncement in the form of policy reform to support their distinct arguments about the nature of the transformation. While Smith and Spear's edited collection, *The Changing Labour Party* (1992), is almost entirely concerned with the content of the policy moderation.

This epiphenomenal schema limits complexity by reducing the transformation to one main effect of genuine change. This can be avoided by approaching the Policy Review and policy reform as just one constantly remodified modifier amongst numerous others. Also, by using the concept of *value* (see below), attention is shifted away from doctrine thus further dethroning the Policy Review as the prime factor within the transformation.

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<sup>6</sup>This is a good example of retrospective analysis as outlined in chapter two showing that effects can modify factors by positing them as causes through such analysis. This also shows that analyst and analysis are deeply involved in the construction of their subject matter and affect its development.

The fourth criticism is that the current approaches generally ignore the role of ideology. (The exceptions to this are Smith (1994) and Hay (1994) on revisionism and Thatcherism respectively but both deal with the influences of these on doctrinal matters rather than the role of deep ideological trends). As was shown above, the existing analyses tend towards an emphasis upon the rational, personal and contingent political elements of Labour Party behaviour. Maybe it is a reflection of the changing political agenda but this emphasis represents something of a shift in Labour Party analysis. With the sole exception of Elliott (1993) none of the contributors to the analysis of Labour in the 1980s have placed the concepts of electoralism, parliamentarianism and labourism at the heart of their studies. This is despite the fact that it was just such issues that played a central role in the causal processes identified by the chief analysts of the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. Miliband (1972; first published 1961), Pelling (1972) Coates (1975) Nairn (1978, first published 1964), Howell (1980), Hinton (1983) and Anderson (1992, first published 1964) all either employed such concepts in a way that was fundamental to their approach or showed signs of being fundamentally influenced by those concepts.

The ignorance of these approaches in analyses of Labour in the 1980s is a gap because, although these studies alone often employ very rigid and deterministic analyses, they are one other source for the identification of causes and effects that could be used to complexify our study, when taken alongside the more recent writings outlined above. In particular a wide range of differing explanations may prove useful when applying a multi-causal and multi-effectual approach. As such, it is worth taking a brief look at these analyses and some other associated explanations.

Coates summarises the approach as follows:

... the Labour Party, in its gradualism, has neither created nor sustained the one social force, namely a radicalised working class, which alone could provide it with the power base on which to effect a socialist transformation ... Instead the Labour Party has chosen to define socialism, even in its most radical periods, as public ownership, state planning and welfare provision - as a set of social changes, that is, which could be implemented (and only implemented) by its own Parliamentarians, capturing and using the Parliamentary State and its bureaucracy in open electoral battle. ... (A)s a corollary of that, the Labour Party has always relied, in its pursuit of its notion of socialism, on the voluntary co-operation of the very social forces (...) whose powers and privileges would be undermined by any serious attempt 'to bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families' (1975: 219).

Here in this extract is the tension, often identified by observers of Labour in this period, between the goals and the methods adopted by the Labour Party in all its paradoxical and ironic detail: the goals of the Party, defined as they are by the various institutional and ideological traditions of the labour movement, are constantly confounded by the means it chooses to achieve those goals - means shaped by just the same institutional and ideological pressures.

For Nairn, as for most of the analysts who have developed this approach, the Labour Party has been profoundly influenced by the nature of the organisations out of which it was born. Prime amongst these being the profound moderation implicit in the Liberal Party, the trade union movement, the Church and the Fabian Society (Nairn 1975: 323-334; Coates 1975: 5-12; Miliband 1972: 17-38; Howell 1980: 17-18; 33-35). In Nairn, this moderation which expresses itself in the form of a commitment to the parliamentary system, its electoral procedures and the limited socio-political vision of a trade union movement obsessed with piecemeal gain is upheld by an internal Party structure that gives the trade union and the PLP leadership the greatest share of the power while consigning rank and file militants to the illusion of democratic participation at conference (Nairn 1975: 338-346). As with Coates, Nairn's analysis is shot through with a structural inevitability about the direction of the Party and movement. Nairn goes so far as to describe the Party's approach as an "ingenious vicious circle"

designed to perpetually promise advance towards socialism and perpetually move away from it in reality (1978: 345).

For these young doyens of the Trotskyite and libertarian New Left which had a brief and limited flourishing in the 1970s, the argument that Labour was structurally condemned to moderation made particular political sense as they were keen to build a revolutionary movement *outside* the Party. As Nairn states:

This is the whole tragedy of Labourism. British trade unionism could not avoid stifling British socialism within one unified body, given the immense strength of the former and the weakness and incoherence of

the latter. The price paid by the British Left for 'unity', therefore, was high - half a century of frustration for the most vital and militant forces in the working class, the formation of the permanent Fabian dynasty as their leadership (351).

As such, it is not unusual to find these writers taking the Labour left to task for their cries of betrayal against Party and union leaders (cries reproduced by Heffernan and Marqusee 1992 in the context of the 1980s). In the eyes of those writers influenced by the critical concepts of electoralism, parliamentarianism and labourism, these accusations evade the structural constraints on the Party by utilising contingent personal factors to explain Labour's moderate history. Nairn expresses this most clearly:

... the angry denunciation of leaders in which sectarians and the Labour Left wing have always indulged has served only to conceal the underlying conditions of betrayal, the circumstances in the party, the movement, the class itself which have generated corrupt and half hearted leadership. Labourism is a system which *cannot* be led by revolutionaries (1978: 317).

Coates (1975: 166-167) makes an identical point attacking what he describes as the "sell-out" thesis prevalent on the labour left. Of course the labour left, which seeks a radical change in British society through the organ of the Labour Party and movement cannot accept a view which sees that Party as irredeemably anti-radical, therefore contingent personal or political factors are the only alternative explanation.

However, not all analysts influenced by the same concepts as Coates and Nairn take quite such a rigid view. Miliband, for example, although pessimistic about the possibility of weakening the Labour Party's commitment to parliamentarianism, electoralism and labourism (1972: 372-376) sees the influence of these ideological causes on Labour's relationship to party and governmental institutions in far more contingent terms:

Of political parties claiming socialism to be their aim, the Labour Party has always been one of the most dogmatic - not about socialism, but about the Parliamentary system. Empirical and flexible about all else, its leaders have always made devotion to that system their fixed point of reference and the conditioning factor of their political behaviour. This is not to say that the Labour Party has never been a party of revolution ... It is rather that the leaders of the Labour Party have always rejected any kind of political action (such as industrial action for political purposes) which fell, or which appeared to them to fall, outside the framework and conventions of the parliamentary system (1972: 13).

As with much of Miliband's analysis which has always been wary of structural approaches, there is no irreversible, vicious circle that traps the Labour Party into a particular course of action, it is simply that the Party's leaders have a very strong ideological and political commitment to certain approaches characteristic of "bourgeois politicians with ... a certain bias towards social reform" (1972: 373).

Anderson's approach (1992: *passim*), on the other hand, oscillates between the rigid and flexible understanding of the Party's moderation but most interestingly he introduces further

institutional and ideological elements into the equation to explain Labour's traditional anti-revolutionary stance. Anderson argues that England has a unique history of class compromise that began with the stunted bourgeois revolution of the seventeenth century and was consolidated by the era of imperialism. This, he argues, has created a non-revolutionary bourgeoisie socially, culturally and politically aligned with the aristocracy, a group more usually regarded, in continental history, as the enemy of the middle class. The result of this is a stifling socio-political culture in England that is constantly non-radical, nationalistic, and nostalgic. This legacy has influenced Labour in that, unlike its sister movements in Europe, it has no tradition of revolution to draw upon as on the continent and it has been bequeathed a political culture and a set of national institutions that are obsessively deferential to the established hierarchy. So, for example, Labour rails against class distinctions and the institutional and cultural snobbery that the feudal aristocracy has imprinted upon English society but pays little attention to the real basis of the economic system - relations of production (31).

It should also be mentioned that Panitch (1971) writing at the same time as these analysts developed an understanding of Labour's history which also drew on the interaction of its institutional and ideological elements although his approach did not make the same use of the concepts of parliamentarianism, electoralism and labourism. Instead Panitch argues that the Labour Party has always been most deeply affected by the institutional and ideological tensions of its dual identity as a party representing the sectional interests of the organised working-class *and* as a party of government that must represent the interests of the whole nation acting as a force for integration of different groups (199-200; *passim*; this view is also present as a less-explicitly stated theme in Marquand 1991: 189-207; *passim*). Thus for Panitch the key point in Labour's development, that has set the tone for its behaviour ever



since, was not necessarily the development of its parliamentarianism, electoralism and labourism but the point at which the Party ceased to see socialism as the goal of a mature working class and instead regarded it as the integrative goal of a mature society (1971: 189).

As was mentioned above the influence of these ideas on analyses of Labour's transformation in the 1980s has been extremely small. Only Elliott (1993) makes use of the approach, drawing particularly on Anderson, but his work is a study of the Party's history as a whole providing only one section on Labour since 1983. Similarly, other places where this analytical tradition is utilised by authors writing in the 1980s is included in some very brief comments which relate to Labour's general history. For example, Cliff and Gluckstein argue that the Labour Party has combined the class consciousness of the working class and the popular commitment to the nation to produce parliamentarianism and an economistic trade unionism (1989:2). While Wainwright has argued that the Party and movement have ignored the truly radical implications of workers self-organisation out of a commitment to Parliament (1987: 34-35).

The broad thrust of these approaches would undoubtedly be critical of much of the analysis on Labour in the 1980s, focusing as it does on face-value doctrinal pronouncements or accepting, relatively uncritically, the rationalism of the modernisation process. It seems likely, if we take the little Elliott has written of this period as our source, that this analytical tradition would see the changes of the 1980s as a continuation of the Labour Party's drive to moderation justified with radical rhetoric resulting from a deeply ingrained labourist ideology combined with the Party's socio-political position as an electoralist organisation and the dead-weight of England's conservative political culture.

For the approach of complexity the above analyses are useful for the following reason. They have attempted to implement a dialectical approach to analysis of the Labour Party by explaining labourism, electoralism and parliamentarianism not just in terms of ideology but in terms of the interaction of ideological principles and the structural position of the Party. This dialectic (as was suggested in Chapter Two) has an element of greater complexity about it, in that it attempts to understand, or at least indicate, the complex and very close causal relations between areas that are treated as distinct elsewhere. In addition, the approach brings in the ignored element of ideology thus augmenting the causal factors we must take into account by one. In this thesis, the existence of this further causal factor, *and* the close relation between ideological principles and more 'concrete' factors is represented largely in the concept of *value* but is also a theme running throughout the analysis which aims to study the interaction and inter-retroaction of all causal processes, if not in as rigid and deterministic way as the likes of Nairn, Coates et al.

A further analysis we may wish to consider for the critical light it can cast upon the existing analyses is that of Lewis Minkin who has addressed himself to the Party in the 1980s in his work *The Contentious Alliance* (1991). In particular Minkin deals with the relationship between the unions and the Party and, as was mentioned above, is keen to explore this relationship as one of great complexity. To this end Minkin's approach is to provide highly detailed descriptions of the Party-union relationship throughout its history whilst clearly taking care not to make broad generalisations about the nature or development of that relationship.

If his analysis is informed by any single principle, it is the broad idea that the relationship between Party and unions is governed by rules and procedures, most of which were not

embodied in constitutional documents. For Minkin these rules and procedures ensure the differentiation of spheres and functions between the Party leadership and the union leadership and thus "vitally affected the distribution of power in the relationship" (Minkin 1991: xiv). However, Minkin never applies this idea to the point where it simplifies or evades the complexity of actual events - it is largely used to augment the factors influencing change in the relationship. Furthermore, the notion of unwritten rules and procedures is flexible enough to allow it to change subtly over time and space and to suggest a depth of complexity in the Party and movement's transformation ignored by more rigid principles.

In particular, this thesis shows how when Kinnock's reputation within the Party was at its lowest following the 1987 election defeat, it was the existence of such rules of propriety which ensured that the unions did not use their power to have him removed despite considerable dissatisfaction with his leadership (see chapter eight). However, as Minkin has dealt in enormous detail and with great understanding of the Party-union relationship in this period, this thesis will not repeat his study but will introduce the issue only where it is essential to the development of my analysis or where original material has been gleaned.

Minkin's approach can be critical of the existing analyses because it represents an attempt to produce a truly complex account by avoiding the temptation of identifying overarching or limited sets of causes. Despite its 658 pages of intense and close analysis and description, one still gets the sense that Minkin feels that the work could be even more detailed and complex. While other analyses seem drawn to the need to simplify, Minkin seems powerfully drawn to the need to reflect complexity. Although the approaches are different, this thesis shares such a concern.

The above criticisms show that the existing analyses do not highlight the complexity of inter-retroaction between causes and effects. There is no flow or play of different elements and processes in the existing analyses. As such, simplification rather than complexity is the characteristic goal of the current approaches. This is not to say that each argument does not contain strong explanatory elements, which in a non-paradoxical form might be regarded as constituting elements of the 'truth', but they clearly cannot alone, or even placed alongside each other in one text, provide a complex explanation as conceived in chapter two. And they most definitely cannot begin to provide that tactical approach demanded by the first chapter which nudges the reader a few millimetres towards 'understanding'.

## **DEVELOPING A COMPLEX APPROACH TO LABOUR IN THE 1980s**

The previous chapter suggested a series of methods for achieving the tactical goals of a complex approach. These were the use and identification of: multi-causal/multi-effectual approaches; multiplication; fuzzy categories; and inter-retroactive processes. With the exception of the method of acknowledging simplicity in the text, a tactic which must of necessity be left until later, we can now begin to develop these approaches within the context of the Labour Party.

### **The Multi-causal/Multi-effectual Approach**

The immediate implications of the multi-causal and multi-effectual approach is to take all of the arguments and approaches outlined above and combine them to provide a multiplicity of different origins and results. We can no doubt find further evidence backing arguments which

identify rational calculation *and* factional alliances *and* personality as causes of change. Such evidence may also help us to develop these arguments further. We may also wish to consider the notion that the changes of the 1980s were inspired both by the revisionist tradition and the ideas of Thatcherism even though, in the argument between Smith and Hay these different points of view are presented as incommensurable.

In particular, we can introduce the approach based upon parliamentarianism and its associated concepts. It clearly provides another source for the identification of causes of the changes of the 1980s. It introduces structural and long-term ideological determinants of change in the Party, whereas the analyses developed during the 1980s have tended to concentrate on more contingent factors such as personality, rational calculation, medium and short-term ideological developments and political splits and alliances. Of course, as is suggested by Coates' and Nairn's hostility to the "sell-out" thesis, these various approaches do not traditionally always sit easily together, indeed some may see them as fundamentally contradictory.

This contradiction does not necessarily present a problem for a multi-causal/effectual approach. Part of the acknowledgement of complexity and inter-retroaction is the recognition that the relations between different causal processes is far from clear, what may seem contradictory when aligned to a particular political project or piece of analytical dogma, may in fact be a complex process of inter-retroaction. As such it may be fruitful to investigate the interaction between the structural and the contingent despite their apparent contradiction.

It should be added here that as an analyst aiming at complexity, there is also virtue in extending the number of causal processes involved in explaining the changes in the Party. I am, of course, not tied to the existing approaches; with new evidence and analysis I hope to

show that the existing approaches can be developed and extended. What must be avoided is an attempt to show how the discovery of new causal processes rules out completely other existing explanations - such an act would be to limit rather than increase complexity.

### **Multiplication**

Another method of enhancing the complexity of our analysis mentioned in chapter two was that of 'multiplication'. It has already been shown how this applies with particular power to the issue of the left-right spectrum in the Party when it is transected by alternative distinctions of ethnicity and generation. There would be little purpose at this point to start highlighting others; their tactical and suasive content can only exist when presented alongside empirical evidence. Suffice it to say that further areas of study will deal with how the idea of a Party 'leadership' is multiplied into a 'core leadership', a leadership formed around the 'soft left' described here as the 'new establishment', and a leadership, largely formed around the 'right', which never took part in the *value* transformation and other aspects of the Party's changes in the 1980s. It will also be shown how notions of a singular 'alliance' acting as a power base for Kinnock's project must be multiplied in that such a power base can, in fact, be seen to have been constituted of *two* 'associations' which were in themselves transected by multiple differences over specific issues and around specific identities and *values*. Further areas of multiplication will be highlighted as the text progresses.

### **Values**

The next method is that of the 'fuzzy category' as mentioned in the last chapter. In the context of the analysis of Labour's transformation of the 1980s this means an emphasis upon

what I shall simply call the Party's '*values*'. However, before elaborating this concept further it is worth taking a detour by way of Henry Drucker's (1979) notion of ethos. Although my concept of *values* differs substantially from Drucker's ethos, they both possess a common focus and relevance by virtue of their emphasis upon the non-doctrinal beliefs of the Party. So a brief outline of Drucker's distinction between 'doctrine' and 'ethos' will be informative and provide a context for the elucidation of my own themes.

The starting-point for Drucker is his argument that the Labour Party's ideology and behaviour cannot be understood purely in terms of doctrine; a mistake he feels is made by most analysts of the Party (1979: 8). For Drucker, Labour's nature is equally, if not more so, a product of ethos. He draws the distinction as follows:

Doctrines are what people usually have in mind when they talk of the ideology of the party. Doctrines can be coherent statements of a position. Doctrines can lead to policies: Labour's doctrines commonly do. These policies are recorded in the Reports of the Labour Party Conferences. They can be accepted, rejected, enacted into law, contemptuously ignored, but above all they are explicit. An ethos is not so hard and fast nor so easy to describe. By the ethos of the Party I have in mind what an earlier age might have called the spirit of the Party; its traditions and habits, its feel. The ethos is not explicit, it is not laid down in the rules ... (1991: 244).

Drucker has also said that ethos can be distinguished from doctrine because

the former is not open to recruitment by agreement. It is one thing for the intellectual members of the Labour movement to seek to understand, and to be sympathetic to, the ethos of the workers. Their understanding, however sympathetic, cannot have the same meaning to them that it has to those for whom it arises naturally out of experience (1979: 10).

Marquand has acknowledged the role that Drucker's version of ethos plays in the Labour Party's development claiming that the

nebulous, impalpable dimension of 'ethos' - of mood, symbol and tradition - the subtleties of which are extraordinarily hard to catch on paper ... nevertheless provides the better guide to the party's behaviour (Marquand 1991: 197).

Clearly within an analysis dealing solely with the Labour Party, Drucker's distinction is valid. However, it is also the assertion of this thesis that an emphasis upon non-doctrinal beliefs provide us with a 'fuzzy category' which aids complexity. But before dealing with this aspect, I will explain my notion of *values* and how they differ from Drucker's ethos.

Drucker is right to assert that there is more to the Labour Party's beliefs than simply its doctrinal pronouncements. The very fact that many Party members, who are quite possibly unaware of the various doctrinal pronouncements on various issues at any point in time, would not avoid espousing their own view on certain issues indicates that there is far more to



the Party's beliefs than doctrine. And, more importantly, it is clear that these non-doctrinal beliefs do have a powerful influence over the development of the Party and the actions of its members from the grassroots to the leadership. However, Drucker tends to narrow his notion of ethos to include only rather static and limited notions about Party organisation. The examples he gives of ethos are illustrative of this: the unwillingness on the part of Labour's members to sack its leaders; the Party's expectation of sacrifice from its leaders and employees; the Party's tendency to save its money; and its belief in formal explicit rules (1979: 12-18). The concept of *values* as I use it here has a wider application meaning the broad, deep-seated, non-doctrinal beliefs about the very aims of the Party. This is significant because while Drucker is clearly correct to focus upon non-doctrinal matters, it seems narrow to limit this non-doctrinal principle merely to organisational rules. It is evident (and this thesis hopes to provide the evidence) that individuals in the Party are motivated by non-doctrinal beliefs broader than simple organisational rules and procedures.

In this thesis I argue that three such *values* dominated the transformation of the 1980s. I shall briefly mention these here, a more detailed analysis and description of them is provided throughout chapters four to nine; in addition, there is a sense, which shall come through from those chapters, that the actual content of these *values* cannot be described too deeply in abstract as they gain their meaning largely from their context and the complex and multiple articulations in which they are involved.

The first of these *values* I shall call the 'defend the people' *value*. This is the deeply-held belief on the part of many in the Party that a prime aim of Labour must be to ensure the welfare of the vulnerable or subjected throughout society. The second shall be called the 'basic principles *value*'. This amounts to the belief that Labour's aim must be to implement a

series of basic principles. This may sound vague and broad but the thesis will show that vague *values* of this sort - which represent a type of blank sheet - structured the conflict of the 1980s and as is shown immediately below, it was their very blankness which made them so important and such sources of dispute. The final *value* is labelled 'the vote maximisation *value*'. This is the belief that Labour's aim must be to win votes and gain power. Much of the existing literature on Labour's transformation and commentaries of the time tended to portray this as a *value* belonging only to Kinnock and his supporters but this is, I hope to show, a distortion. All sectors of the Party, including the radical wing, felt Labour must win votes - the differences existed in how to this was to be achieved. The reasons why these particular *values* are chosen for analysis are given below.

It will be shown how these *values* provided the battleground for much of the conflict that occurred in the 1980s and thus formed the foundation of the Party's transformation. However, the conflict of the 1980s was nothing so basic as a battle between these differing *values*, rather it can be shown that each faction and stream within the Party during the 1980s held all these *values* dear. These *values* played a role in the disputes and developments of the 1980s because different groups and individuals in the Party disagreed about the strategies that were appropriate for the achievement of these *values*. Much of the arguments and events of the 1980s can be read, in part, as battles by one group or figure to persuade others that their favoured strategy was the best way to achieve one or more of these three *values* and that strategies favoured by others were wrong-headed. These strategies were manifold relating either to grand strategy or strategy relating to specific events - the New Strategic Thinking, direct action, the 'dented shield', the Policy Review, the mass party approach to name a few. In this context, these disputes of the 1980s are struggles for the articulation and the disarticulation of a series of *values* and the strategies for their fulfilment.

However, before this analysis sounds too schematic, it must be restated that processes of articulation and disarticulation are never simple. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, articulation and disarticulation are inter-retroactive. When one element is articulated to another, the meaning of both those elements is often altered one by the other. Furthermore, we will also see that articulation does not just occur neatly between one *value* and one strategy. In an attempt to persuade others of the validity of their view, individuals and groups sometimes brought more than one *value* to bear. In addition, it must be acknowledged that the debates about *values* and strategies did not occur in a vacuum, the articulations and disarticulations occurred, and were influenced in their form, by the events going on around them. As such, it should be clear from this rather abstract account, of the complexity that this analysis allows for whilst providing an insight into the changes of the 1980s.

It should also be said that while the thesis will concentrate on these three *values*, there are times when even vaguer *values* (almost akin to feelings or emotional attachments) had a bearing on the transformation. These may be factors such as a commitment to tradition, or a sense of youth and modernity. It will be shown that these very vague, non-doctrinal *values* did play a lesser role at specific times and they will be introduced as is necessary.

Now we must turn to the question of what a notion like '*values*' brings to the search for complexity. The attraction of this focus on a non-doctrinal concepts such as *values* for a complex approach is that it exhibits the vital characteristics of a fuzzy category required by the analyst. It has no absolutely firm boundaries. When involved in the identification of a

causal process it stretches the implications of that process across space and time since *values* envelop the whole Party.

These *values*, as features of the Party, are remarkably viscous, they are not fixed or absolutely explicit at any one point in space or time, they blend, in a complex and multiple way, with other features of the Party such as institutional structures, rational calculation and doctrine. Furthermore, they are features that, by definition and due to the viscosity of *value*, affect all members, stretch across the whole of the Party undergoing development as they imply wide areas of space and time. In essence, the fact that *value* is everywhere and nowhere in particular ensures that when it plays a part in analysis it can effectively communicate an underlying sense of complexity by implying that inter-retroaction incorporates an enormous variety of factors active across the whole Party.

This can be compared with doctrine which tends, as a concept, to simplify rather than complexify. This simplification occurs because analysts have taken doctrine to be the belief of the Party as a whole whereas it in fact represents only what a certain part of the leadership may believe. This has not only meant that analysts, who concentrate on doctrine, have failed to explain the actual nature of the Party (if such a thing can be pinpointed) but will also misrepresent the full range of the causes that go into the development of the Party or the full range of the effects that any change may have. *Values*, in this sense, are also useful for an analyst attempting a complex understanding, it broadens the range of originary points within the Party available to explain any change and it widens the significant effects of a change. By recognising that the Party is more than doctrine and more than its leadership clique, the ideological causes and effects can no longer be limited to a few 'seminal' or exemplary texts such as the Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values or Crosland's *The Future of*

Socialism; nor can personal causes and effects be limited to the virtues and vices of a few leading figures; nor can rational causes and effects be regarded as self-evident matters relating simply to electoral strategy. Rather these are all factors which have complex Party-wide effects by virtue of their relationship to *value*. As such, a non-doctrinal approach suggests persuasively that the significant aspects of the Labour Party and its internal interactions are broader than have been previously explored; the Party is the Party, it cannot be reduced to one or other group no matter how powerful that group may appear to be within Labour's structures. In this sense, Drucker does a great service to complex analysis: in broadening significance, he has widened the temporal and spatial focus available to an analyst and thus made an appreciation of complexity that much more possible.

*Values* will also be used as the prime way by which we can bring notions of parliamentarianism, labourism and electoralism back into analysis but without a reliance upon the simplified and rigid historical generalisations of Anderson et al. When I identify the existence of the *value* that Labour must maximise its vote (see chapter four and *passim*), this clearly draws on the recognition of electoralism and parliamentarianism as a feature of Labour Party members' outlook. And similarly where the *value* of defending the vulnerable is identified (see chapter five and *passim*), this clearly, in some of its forms, has links to the non-ideological streams of parliamentarianism and labourism. Similar echoes of Anderson et al. will be found wherever the concept of *value* is mentioned.

Thus we can see how effective the use of a non-doctrinal concept like *values* can be in aiding our search for complexity.

The question of why these three particular *values* have been chosen must now be addressed. The first point is that even a relatively cursory observation of Labour in the 1980s will allow one to realise that the Party's transformation in this era could not be explained without reference to disputes about the mission of the Party and that these disputes were clearly formulated around questions of vote-maximisation, defence of the subjected, and the Party as an embodiment and bearer of a series of basic principles. Drucker argues that, despite the 'speculative' nature of identifying elements of ethos to analyse, he chooses those he does because the Party's behaviour cannot be understood without reference to them (Drucker 1979: 12). Like Drucker I have chosen conceptions without which the Party's behaviour in the 1980s could not be understood.

Secondly, these three *values* are the ones which are most commonly used by Kinnock, his supporters and his enemies to persuade others of their approach and explain their beliefs in speeches, writings and interviews with the author. They are the *values* which keep re-occurring in debate throughout the period covered by this thesis. In this sense the evidence for this claim can only be presented within the main body of the thesis and the verisimilitude which characterises it.

The last point can also apply to the third reason for choosing these particular features: they are clearly observable in the weave of the Party's transformation at the time. The very direction and detail of the history of the Party between 1983 and 1989 as presented here attests to their primary significance. Drucker, himself, has made an apposite comment in relation to this which applies just as well to any non-doctrinal belief in the Party as to ethos:

When describing the ethos of a group we are forced to make hypotheses on the basis of the footprints which the group has left behind. All this makes the ethos more difficult than the doctrine to investigate - but not for that reason any less real or less important (Drucker 1979: 12).

Thus in the concept of non-doctrinal *values*, we have a notion which deepens our analysis of Labour in the 1980s and aids our search for complexity by bringing in new causal processes beyond that of doctrine, by containing within itself complex processes of articulation and thus inter-retroaction, and by allowing us to focus upon the beliefs of the whole Party rather than just the leadership.

### **Inter-retroaction**

Of course, once we have begun to make such observations within the context of complexity, we cannot avoid involving the next method suggested by the first chapter: identifying processes of inter-retroaction. It is difficult at this level of abstraction to show exactly how such processes of inter-retroaction can be identified, that will have to be left to the following chapters, but we can develop the most recent points by asserting that the various causal processes identified above do not simply imply one another, they actually modify one another through a process of complex inter-retroaction, and it is examples of this relationship that we must highlight. And, as is indicated in the last chapter, it can only be *examples* that are given since an identification of *all* inter-retroactions is impossible.

For example, we may wish to show how closely interwoven in a dynamic inter-retroactive form were the rational vote-maximisation calculation of the leadership and its supporters, the alliance between soft left and right, and the centralisation of power in Kinnock's office. While in the existing literature these three central arguments are usually presented in a limited linear form, it is far from inconceivable that we can find inter-retroactive relationships between all three, each process modifying the others in a complex fashion. For example, the centralisation of power in the leader's office gave the leader more control over sources of information within Labour, over who became leading figures in the Party, and over what was said by those leading figures. This would almost certainly have enhanced the ability of the leadership to have their particular rational vote-maximisation strategy accepted as common sense, as well as making it far more difficult for the soft left and the right to find anywhere else but the leadership as a source of power and legitimation thus enhancing their alliance with each other and Kinnock. These two developments would then have further enhanced the power of the leadership to centralise which would have in turn reinforced the alliance and the rational vote-maximisation strategy. Of course, this process is portrayed here as beginning with the centralisation of the leadership but as the first chapter pointed out there is no clear starting-point in inter-retroactive causal processes. And this introduces further complexity, for not only does centralisation, the alliance and rational vote-maximisation retroact in this way, it is also clear that one of the causes of the centralisation process itself was the aim of gaining a greater hold over the Party in order to win more votes while the development of the soft left and its apparent alliance with the right was caused by a commitment to such a rational strategy.

Further complexity can also be observed in the fact that inter-retroactive processes of this sort are not necessarily self-reinforcing, they may also lead to change rather than enhancement of



their integral parts. This, it could be conceived, is precisely what happened in early 1986, when the centralisation of the leader's office led to a weakening of the alliance: figures on the soft left were critical of Kinnock's by-passing of the NEC during the launch of the Freedom and Fairness campaign which itself was a campaign very much inspired by the rational vote-maximisation strategy. So we can also see how this modification retro-acted upon the centralisation by limiting it (at least for a short period) since Kinnock had to consult the NEC following the protests, which thus saw a subtle shift in the vote-maximisation strategy, since centralisation was part of this. Paradoxically though, and in true complex fashion, this may have briefly re-enhanced the alliance since the soft left now felt they had been consulted and thus felt more at ease with Kinnock again. The permutations and interpretations are manifold. It should be pointed out that this is merely an example, as my own analysis will show, some of these arguments that constitute part of this inter-retroactive process need further development and sophistication, sometimes along an inter-retroactive line itself.

However, we can observe that these two examples of inter-retroaction processes are somewhat distinct. The first deals with inter-retroactions between the analytical spheres of Labour politics outlined in the first sections of this chapter. While the second deals with the inter-retroaction between particular factors, associations or individuals linked specifically to the major changes that occurred in the Party over the 1980s. We can add a third to this in the form of the identification of inter-retroaction between the main 'issues' or events which I have chosen as the focus for the chapters of part two in this thesis. For example, we could study how the new agenda inter-retroacted with policy reform.

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This thesis will attempt to actually identify and detail some of these inter-retroactions but more commonly it will rely upon the implication concepts of articulation and negative identity construction as outlined in chapter two. However, we can also use a more directly practical method by employing far more regularly than normal the technique of inserting in parentheses “see chapter x” next to a particular comment. This will be done to try and communicate what may be called the ‘dictionary effect’ of complexity where because of inter-retroaction one factor will always be causally linked to a huge number of others which themselves will ultimately feed modifications back to the original cause/effect. This bears a strong metaphorical resemblance to the process of looking up a definition in a dictionary whereby the given definition will include words which can themselves be sought and so on until the point where one will ultimately reach a definition which will include the original word one looked-up.

### **Descriptive Detail**

It was mentioned above how Lewis Minkin presents a sense of complexity to the reader through highly detailed description of events and processes of change. Akin to this there are a few sections of the thesis which provide detailed descriptions of events and processes of change within the Party during the 1980s. On their own terms these sections serve the purpose of providing important historical accounts of areas not covered in the existing literature and of providing a firm context for more analytical points. At certain points, these sections serve their own purpose in illustrating an analytical point. Of course, in this sense

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they also provide the source for the discovery of further causes and effects of the transformation not recognised in the existing literature.

However, they are also akin, in a more limited way, to Minkin's attention to detail and the sense of the complexity of actual day-to-day change that this can inspire in the reader. Although, one could not claim that this approach is unique to a work specifically searching for complexity (in the way that multiplication is, for example), it is worth mentioning that in a broader theoretical and analytical context, these sections do aid this search for complexity.

By using these methods we nudge ourselves and the reader towards a realisation that the distinction between the above three categories are themselves problematic simplifications. As it becomes clear that any one factor is a constantly remodified modifier, its integrity, both as a useful aggregate of many other interactions and factors and as a factor itself distinct from others, breaks down. It becomes clear that any set of distinctions or categories is one flux, a permanent change within one larger complex inter-retroactive context. If this thesis can begin to get across the sense of that context then it will have achieved its tactical aim<sup>11</sup>.

However, I have still had to undertake a massive simplification in order to provide this explanation; in order to remain within the boundaries of the model of analysis preferred by this time and space. Each sifting of events and issues, each distinction, each interpretation of occurrences does violence to the complexity of our world. It leaves one feeling that those

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<sup>11</sup>Once again Zen appears apposite here, since one of the prime goals of the Zen approach is the rejection of all dualities - the recognition that all categories and distinctions fail understanding. Zen has, for example, been described as thinking without concepts.

physicists who suspect that there can be no better model of the universe than the universe itself (Poundstone 1987) have understood something profound. Maybe, in a similar vein, there can be no better model of our political world than that world itself. But these are considerations for the final chapter of this thesis: first, the explanation, then we can acknowledge its simplicity.

## **PART II**

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# **LABOUR'S TRANSFORMATION**

**1983 - 1989**

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## THE EARLY DAYS OF THE LEADERSHIP

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This chapter begins the analysis which is inspired by, and will aid, the search for complexity. The chapter's main contribution to this search is the effecting of a growth in the quantity of perceived causes and effects involved in the transformation of the Labour Party. This is done by stretching the temporal and spatial lines of the causal process as defined in chapter two. This is relatively easily achieved because, in their attempt to explain the changes in the Party, Hughes and Wintour (1990), Smith and Spear (1992), and Heffernan and Marqusee (1992) devote the largest portion of their studies to the Party since 1987 - five years after the actual election of Neil Kinnock as leader. This may be, in part, the result of the phenomenon, that Drucker noted, of analytical interest being primarily directed towards the doctrine of Labour. Since the greatest overhaul of paper policy was undertaken after 1987, in the form of the Policy Review, an observer taking doctrine as their guide to the nature of the Labour Party could be forgiven for thinking that this was the most crucial and profound period of Neil Kinnock's leadership and thus the key to explaining the transformation.

A detraction from the concentration upon this period is Eric Shaw's observation of the need to draw

attention to the largely unnoticed significance of the shift in gear from late 1985 ... (n)ot only was much of the 1983 programme cast aside,

but several of the themes of the Policy Review ... were clearly prefigured (1994: xiii).

However, the point of the greatest turmoil for Kinnock's leadership, the 1984-1985 period, is barely analysed by all analysts. As will be shown in the next chapter, this is a flaw since it is this period, probably more than any other, in which the very *values* of the Party undergo a radical metamorphosis. (*Values* being those non-doctrinal, deeply-felt beliefs about the mission of the Party which inform much debate in the 1980s and are held by a very large part, possibly all, of the membership.) However, if the 1985-1987 period is only just acknowledged, and the 1984-1985 period is hardly noticed, then the eight and a half months between the 1983 election defeat and the start of the Miner's Strike have been almost totally ignored.

This is a serious omission, for a close study of this brief space of time shows that it provided its own significant contribution to the transformation of the Party. This contribution included the following factors. Debates and developments during the leadership contest of 1983 prefigured and inspired many of the changes that came later especially in the realms of Party democracy, Party unity and policy reform. The election of the 'dream ticket' placed in power two figures committed to reform and established a 'core leadership' that became one of the main agents of transformation. This contrasts with existing literature which has not appreciated the commitment to reform on the part of the new leadership as early as 1983. It is shown how an introspective reforming zeal was already gripping the TUC prior to Kinnock's leadership and how this coincided with the election of a new group of trade union leaders who were to prove central to the success of the transformation process. Changes to the campaigning style of Labour from the first day of Kinnock's election show a much earlier and

multiple origin for the development of a new electoral strategy than has generally been accepted. Various *values* underwent important processes of change and articulation - the latter being the process by which two or more features are modified by the act of being linked one to the other by means of argument or action; as was outlined above, articulation plays a specific role in the search for complexity. And finally a series of reforming policy initiatives were launched in the areas of defence, the EEC, home ownership, unemployment, moderating budgetary commitments, accepting aspects of Thatcherite legislation and even launching the idea of a policy review. These policy developments have long been ignored by existing literature.

This chapter also makes a number of other points which either differ from or build upon existing literature.

The "mass party approach" to reform of the Party is identified and analysed as an alternative to the ultimate form that reform took under Kinnock. This "mass party approach" was highly influential on the soft left in the early to mid-eighties and had a complex relationship to Kinnock's own agenda involving both aspects of conflict, some commonality and, importantly, increasing articulation of the two approaches. This mass party approach, its nature and its relationship to the soft left and to Kinnock's reforms is not identified or analysed anywhere else in the existing literature.

The chapter also indicates and explores the importance of the non-doctrinal aspects of the new campaigning style of the Party - aspects which are based less upon the calculated response of the core leadership (a feature of key explanatory importance to the existing literature - see chapter three) and more upon *values* and their appeal. In particular, it is shown



how the hard-nosed professionalism and business-like approach of the new campaigning style appealed to younger members of the Party leadership who had been embarrassed by the amateurism of the 1983 campaign and were frustrated by the complacency of older figures. It is also shown, in this context, how the mass party approach held a similar non-doctrinal appeal to the soft left in its emphasis upon radical grass roots activity and single-issue campaigns.

All of these empirical findings aid the search for complexity. By identifying an earlier starting-point for the transformation, this chapter highlights a whole range of causes of that transformation which have previously been ignored, as can be seen above. Furthermore, these causes are dealt with on their own terms - they are not reduced to one other over-arching causal process. This chapter also makes a start in showing the complex, inter-retroaction between different elements in the transformation. (Inter-retroaction is the notion that causal processes are made up of a circular relationship between the posited cause and the posited effect - the retroaction - and that this process is itself modified, again in circular fashion, by other, apparently distinct, causal processes.) This is particularly the case with the relationship between the new campaigning approach, the overall reform process favoured by Kinnock, and the mass party approach influential on the soft. In this context, the concepts of articulation and negative identity construction are introduced. (To recap - negative identity construction is the notion that identities are developed through opposition to other identities - as was outlined in chapter three, this has certain connotations within the context of the search for complexity) We also see the introduction of *values* in the form of vote maximisation and in some other more minor aspects such as Kinnock's personal appeal to the Party - as was pointed-out in previous chapters these *values* indicate a level of complexity and fluidity in the

beliefs of Party members and the interaction of those beliefs throughout the Party not indicated by the simpler, more doctrinal methods used in existing literature.

Overall, what is presented here is a transformation process that has earlier, more diverse and more convoluted roots than is presented in some of the existing literature with its emphasis upon rational response by the Party leadership to electoral and/or internal Party problems in the mid-eighties.

#### **THE LEADERSHIP CONTEST: EARLY ORIGINS OF THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA**

The leadership contest, which ultimately brought Neil Kinnock to power, established a series of debates within the Party - specifically about unity, party democracy and policy reform - that would make a major contribution to the transformation. The contest, being a period in which differences and internal debate are accepted as appropriate, provided a space within which issues could be raised which set the tone for future changes in the Party. It would also begin the development of new *values*, particularly the vaguer notions about being modern and forward-looking, that were to be an important feature of the transformation to come.

Furthermore, study of the contest displays that support for some aspects of the coming transformation already existed. This in itself suggests multi-causality for if existing analysts are right in locating some causes of change in the 1985 - 1987 period, then earlier signs of support for reform suggest further causes which have been unaccounted for. These further

causes will be analysed more fully in chapter five when the early existence of support for reform has been established.

### **Party Democracy**

The battle for the leader's post was never, in reality, about the post of leader itself. It was clear from the earliest days that Neil Kinnock was a practical certainty (Curran 1983a; Minkin 1991: 344-5). The most obvious reason for this was the fact that Kinnock had received the personal backing of a group of union leaders, whose combined block vote made up over 40% of the trade unions' section of the electoral college. These unions included the TGWU, the NUR, NUPE, the NUM, the UCW, the POEU, Sogat '82 and the ASTMS (Curran 1983a; *The Times*, 13 July 1983).

From the earliest days, therefore, the issue of democracy in the Labour Party was to be a central theme of the leadership contest. The fact that a candidate could so dominate the contest generated a great deal of concern. Unsurprisingly, it was Neil Kinnock's deflated opponents - Roy Hattersley, Peter Shore and Eric Heffer - who displayed this concern most emphatically. The echoes of this debate, particularly in the disputes over OMOV and Kinnock's authoritarianism (see chapter six), continued throughout Kinnock's leadership and clearly became an important feature of the transformation.

However, it was the question of the union's vote in the electoral college that really exercised the passions over democracy in the Party during the contest. As far back as mid-February Shore and Hattersley had announced they were planning to launch a campaign for greater direct democracy in the election of leader and deputy leader and for selection of parliamentary

candidates (The Guardian, 11 February 1983; The Times, 11 February 1983). Shore and Hattersley did their best to keep up the pressure throughout the contest itself by publicly calling for unions to use either a full ballot of union members or the widest possible consultation process (Labour Weekly, 24 June 1983). This pressure also included a motion to the PLP from Austin Mitchell, a close supporter of Hattersley, calling on the CLPs and trade unions to follow the good practice of the parliamentary party by using a full ballot. The motion caused a bitter row between Foot and Hattersley at the PLP meeting where it was discussed - the leader refused to support Mitchell's proposal despite the fact that it already had the backing of the Shadow Cabinet (Labour Weekly, 29 July 1983; The Guardian, 23 July 1983).

In most cases the pleas for more direct democracy had no effect. The only major union to hold a ballot of its members was NUPE, while a union that might have been expected to support Hattersley with a block vote of over 200,000, the EETPU, took the unhelpful decision (from Hattersley's point of view) to boycott the contest altogether on the grounds that it was undemocratic (The Times, 14 July 1983). Following this gesture an EETPU motion at the 1983 Conference that called for use of one member, one vote in Leadership elections was easily defeated (The Labour Party 1983a: 272).

However, demands for a democratisation of the Party were also coming from other quarters and in different forms. The high-profile Labour MP for Birmingham-Perry Barr, Jeff Rooker, had proposed an amendment to the Government's Trade Union Bill which was working its way through Parliament. Rooker demanded that union consultation of levy-payers and the breaking-up of the block vote to enhance proportionality should be enshrined in law (The Guardian, 1 September 1983; The Times, 1 September 1983). Heffer, contrary to much of the

radical wing who were giving him their support in the contest, backed Rooker's bill and actually went further, demanding that CLPs should ballot members, that the CLP block vote be replaced by a proportional system and that constituency parties be given more weight in the electoral college at the expense of the unions (Heffer 1983a).

In addition to this, there was growing support for the use of OMOV in candidate selection at a grassroots level during 1983. Especially in the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, many of whose members were increasingly influenced by the mass party ideal (see below), there was an active debate about the benefits or otherwise of an OMOV-type reform. The origins of the LCC in the radical democratic ideals of the left of the 1960s and 1970s inspired a number of the group's executive members to feel that OMOV was a logical extension of the campaign for mandatory reselection and the use of the electoral college for leadership elections (Interview with Stanley 1994). However, in 1983 the LCC still had close although faltering links to the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy - which had led the demands for the above constitutional reforms. The CLPD had an increasingly Bennite tinge and were opposed to OMOV on the grounds that it could reduce the influence of the unions, lessen debate in CLPs and allow the media to influence internal Party matters. Many active in the LCC and on the group's executive agreed with the CLPD's viewpoint (Interview with Gilby 1994; Interview with Stanley 1994). Thus, even though there was a developing body of support for OMOV at the grassroots, it was largely tacit at this stage for fear that an open debate would cause division - a consideration that was to cause problems for the new leader a year later at the 1984 conference (see chapter six).

These developments display that debate about Party democratisation was well-underway even before Kinnock was elected. It also shows that some early demands were considerably more

radical than anything Neil Kinnock attempted to achieve. The debate about internal democracy brought the issue out into the open. The electoral college, which had been regarded by the radical wing as such a major democratic step forward, seemed to have made little difference with regards to the influence of backroom deals. As a result, the role of the union leaders and their block vote at all levels of the Party was brought to popular attention and sparked-off a dispute that was to last throughout Kinnock's leadership and lead to both failed and partially successful attempts at reform in 1984 and in the late 1980s which themselves had effects upon other aspects of the transformation (see chapter six and chapter nine).

While the leadership contest is dealt with by the existing literature - Heffernan & Marqusee (1992: 36-43) provide the most detail - none have displayed the role of this important debate over internal democracy both for the contest itself and as an early cause of further change in later years.

### **Party Unity**

A common occurrence between 1983 and 1989 were the appeals for unity from many different figures within the Party. In particular, it became an accepted principle of the drive for electoral support and one of its associated strategies (outlined in more detail below as the "active vote maximisation *value*" and the "New Strategic Thinking") that a Party which was perceived to be disunited lost votes. Furthermore, it has been observed by analysts (Hughes & Wintour 1990; Smith 1992a; Shaw 1994) that many radicals in the Party accepted a "self-denying ordinance" (Smith 1992a: 12) on opposing Kinnock in order to fulfil this *value* of unity. Although, the following chapters will attempt to show that this was only one cause of

the transformation, over-emphasised by existing analyses, discovery of similar, earlier calls for unity during the leadership contest stretch the temporal line of cause for this aspect of the transformation and thus, once again, complexify our understanding.

Much of the leadership contest was punctuated with demands for greater Party solidarity. In particular, David Basnett, General Secretary of the GMBATU, called upon the candidates in the contest to stop attacking each other on the grounds that this was increasing division (The Guardian, 26 July; The Times, 26 July 1983). This was a comment directed specifically at Meacher and Hattersley who were conducting a particularly vituperative campaign against one another for the deputy leadership. Kinnock, himself, responded to Basnett's plea by asserting that the Labour Party must be unified in future (The Guardian, 25 July 1983; The Times, 27 July 1983).

However, debate about how best to achieve Party unity centred most explicitly upon the idea of the "dream ticket". This was the notion that a "balanced" ticket of Roy Hattersley from the moderate wing, and Neil Kinnock from the radical wing, would bring the Party together behind a new leadership made-up of these two figures.

Although neither partner in the "dream ticket" explicitly used the phrase to boost their campaign, they did consciously attempt to enhance the powerful appeal of the idea in public. During an interview on the BBC's World at One, Kinnock denied that there were any big differences between him and Roy Hattersley thus strengthening the bond of the "dream ticket" whilst also attempting to enhance his appeal to the moderate wing. Nevertheless, maybe with an eye on his radical support but apparently blind to the inherent contradictions, he went on to say on the same programme that there were no alternatives to the 1983 manifesto policy on

the economy and that he supported unilateral disarmament (The Guardian, 19 July 1983; The Times, 19 July 1983). This 'dream ticket' appeal was bolstered behind the scenes by co-operation between Kinnock and Hattersley despite claims by the former that he was not engaged in such co-operation (See, for example, Tribune, 5 August 1983). Both agreed not to condemn each other in public and Kinnock secretly lobbied on Hattersley's behalf within the trades unions (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

However, the 'dream ticket' approach to unity was condemned most forcefully by Michael Meacher and his supporters. Meacher's campaign tried to present the Kinnock-Hattersley partnership as a re-run of the many previous attempts to unite the party around leaders from either ends of the Labour spectrum. The historical precedents, he argued, had all been failures: Harold Wilson and George Brown, Harold Wilson and Roy Jenkins, James Callaghan and Michael Foot and, most disastrously, Michael Foot and Denis Healey. These "partnerships" that were designed to unite the party had, in fact, ended in rivalry and alternative points of leadership. For Meacher, unity was more likely if a "sensible" leadership of the left was constructed that reflected the real politics of Labour Party members and would not attempt to "steamroll" the right (The Guardian, 11 August 1983; The Times, 11 August 1983). Tribune, edited by Meacher-supporting Chris Mullin, took up this theme in an editorial headed "The Nightmare Ticket":

... the dream ticket is a recipe for disaster. It would merely serve notice that the Labour Party is unable or unwilling to resolve the bitter ideological dispute that has rent it for the last five years ... It would mean that Labour went in to another election with one leader who favoured the retention of nuclear weapons and one who proposed to



abolish them. To imagine that such a fundamental difference of opinion could somehow be negotiated away is a monumental slur on the integrity of both men (Tribune, 24 June 1983).

Through this debate during the leadership contest the issue of Party unity, which developed into a matter of prime concern, became a popular expectation of the new leadership. While, as Meacher's criticisms made clear, previous leaderships had faced similar expectations, this time the issue was all the more intense because of the 1983 defeat. Following that election, unity had become a question of survival and the leadership contest allowed expression of this. However, as this thesis aims to show it would take more than simply the will for unity to end internal division in practice.

### **Policy Reform**

Study of the policy debate that occurred during the leadership contest indicates a surprising degree of fluidity in the positions of the main candidates and suggest that the contest, once again, provided a space within which issues and debates - that were to become key features of the transformation - began to develop.

Defence policy was one area that came in for the attention of reformers. However, it was not Kinnock who was the origin of a softening on unilateralism but Meacher. While Kinnock consistently reasserted his commitment to an unrepentant unilateral policy (see for example, Hattersley *et al.* 1983), Meacher announced that he felt a Labour Government should carry-out a referendum on disarmament before any government action was taken. Hattersley (Hattersley & Mullin 1983) and Shore (Hattersley *et al.* 1983; *The Guardian*, 2 August 1983)

remained hostile to any policy of unilateral disarmament whilst Heffer emphasised the need for a Pan-European policy against nuclear weapons with the UK remaining in NATO whilst working towards the dissolution of both the Western military bloc and the Warsaw Pact (Heffer 1983b).

Similarly, a shift in policy on the EEC was already underway by the time of the General Election. The issue had been one of the "golden sentences" in the 1983 election manifesto that it was hoped would manage to unite Foot and Healey and their respective supporters. As such, the Party's policy on Europe during the campaign for the leadership was officially for withdrawal from the EEC but on "amicable" and negotiated terms (Labour Party 1983b: 33). So the scene was already set for the candidates to shift further on a policy that had become increasingly discredited both inside and outside the Party. Only Shore remained hostile to British membership and the political trajectory of the EEC (Hattersley *et al.* 1983). Whereas Kinnock (*The Times*, 1 August 1983) and Hattersley (Hattersley & Mullin 1983) admitted that the policy should be dropped - clearly more of a shift for Kinnock than for Hattersley. While Heffer took an ambiguous line arguing that:

... whether we like it or not we have a Tory government which will keep us in the EEC, and unfortunately it is a government that is likely to last its full term. Whilst at the end of that time it may still be necessary to say that the only answer for Britain is to withdraw from the EEC, in the meantime we should now develop policies in agreement and association with the other socialist parties and trade unionists in the EEC - and go and fight for them (Hattersley *et al.* 1983: 13).

Meacher backed the 'Out of Crisis' proposal developed by Stuart Holland which had outlined an alternative, socialist form of pan-european unity (Labour Weekly, 16 September 1983).

It was Hattersley, along with Shore, who made the running on the issue of Labour policy in general and prefigured the Policy Review by five years. From early in the campaign Shore called for a radical overhaul of policy, stating that:

The Labour Party has become dangerously introverted; its message blurred and confused; its public face often unattractive; in many areas and on many issues out of touch with the electorate (Shore 1983).

While Hattersley called for Labour to undertake a period of policy examination alongside a "careful reappraisal" of the policy-making process itself so that Labour could

become again the party that represents the hopes and aspirations of our traditional supporters (Labour Weekly, 1 July 1983).

Kinnock, Meacher and Heffer all tended to prescribe less radical solutions to Labour's programme but still suggested some type of reform usually in the form of clarifications and improved presentation for existing policy. As Kinnock himself said in the televised leadership debate:

To those people who believe our policies should be discarded in large part or in whole, I offer the advice of Bernard Shaw - 'If your face is dirty, wash it. Don't cut your head off' (The Times, 1 August 1983).

Whatever, the different degrees of reform demanded by the candidates, it was clear that the necessity of some sort of reforming process was accepted by all before Kinnock and Hattersley were elected. As with the other issues covered here, the leadership contest provided the forum within which these notions could be aired and thus started the process of transformation itself.

As with the issue of internal democracy, the existing literature fails to identify the role that detailed policy debate played in the leadership contest and thus fails to notice the important role the contest played in providing the space for less inhibited discussion of issues which were to become so central to the overall transformation. In this context, it is instructive that, as the rest of this chapter shows, that Kinnock followed the contests with a series of bold moves to expedite the process of policy reform.

### **Kinnock's Appeal**

A further feature of the transformation that was presaged in the leadership contest was a complex articulation of a *value* of Labour movement tradition with a *value* of modernity. This articulation was embodied, more than anywhere else at this time, in the person of Neil Kinnock himself. An embodiment which not only enhanced his appeal but set the tone for future change.

His youth provided a sense of a fresh start; the idea of a young leader appealed to a sense in the Party that it needed to be more forward-looking and yet his strong roots in the unions and his inheritance of the Bevanite mantle as a great orator meant he also had the aura of the proud traditions of working-class politics (Interview with Mortimer 1994; Interview with Davies 1994). As John Edmonds put it

He combined the quality of youth with something of the timeless quality that Michael Foot had and, of course, he had Michael Foot's considerable endorsement. ... He was regarded also as exciting and of the modern age in a way that Michael obviously wasn't (Interview with Edmonds 1994).

More concretely, his youth and his radical politics in the 1970s also meant that he had not been tainted by the failed Labour governments of 1974-1979 (Interview with Davies 1994; Interview with Edmonds 1994). He was also a very high profile figure having made regular television appearances, having attracted press attention as a young left-wing 'firebrand' and having campaigned hard within the Party to win a place on the NEC (Interview with Davies 1994; Interview with Edmonds 1994).

However, as was pointed out above it was the support of the union leaderships that gave Kinnock such an advantage in the contest. His popularity here resulted from all the above considerations but also from the fact that he was regarded within the union movement as someone who would break away from the Wilson/Callaghan tradition of seeing the unions as bodies to be managed and fixed. It was also felt that he was committed to maintaining the historic link between union and party at constituency level. In effect he had let the unions

know that he would take them seriously and this alone commanded great respect and support. In particular because of this respect he won powerful backing and thus "substantial lobbying" on his behalf from Clive Jenkins (Interview with Edmonds 1994).

In many senses, therefore, Kinnock's appeal during the contest and after resided in his ability to combine electoral appeal and radical reform, modernity and tradition, youth and timeless Labour *values*. Aware that he stood at this potent intersection of Labour's various *value's*, he presented himself as the candidate with a vision that did not make the mistakes of old or new extremisms but instead offered a radical third way vision. The candidate commented in an article with the significant title 'Past Principles; Future View':

Democratic Socialism cannot be re-established on the basis of either the old social democracy or on the "new" ultra-leftism. Nor can it be constructed on an amalgam of the two, any more than a wit can be fashioned from two half-wits. A soft left is needed; separate and distinct from the stale vanguardism of the ultra-left and from the atavistic and timid premise of social democracy (Kinnock 1983a).

Thus, the image and *value* embodied in Kinnock developed during the contest was an important feature of the transformation, communicating a willingness to carry-out the necessary modernisations for the sake of electoral success while simultaneously affirming the grand traditions and goals of the Labour movement. As will be explored in much greater detail below, an important cause, aspect and effect of the transformation was this articulation of traditional beliefs of Labourism to a new professional, reforming *value* characteristic of the core leadership.

The leadership contest of 1983 was the earliest indication that a major transformation of the Party was possible. This brief study of the contest indicates earlier origins of the transformation. It multiplies and complexifies our explanation of that transformation. The contest launched debates, foregrounded a new emphasis on unity and started the construction of the unique articulation of old and new that became characteristic of Kinnock's leadership and provided it with a persuasive element which was to be a significant feature of the transformation. This stands in stark contrast to the existing literature where the leadership contest is either dealt with very sketchily or is approached largely from the angle of the political machinations which occurred to enable the final outcome (Heffernan & Marqusee 1992: 36-43; Hughes & Wintour 1990: 6-7; Shaw 1994: 29; Seyd 1987: 166). The contest was also the precursor to another factor that was similarly one of the multiple causes and effects of the transformation: the election of the 'dream ticket' itself.

### **THE ELECTION OF THE 'DREAM TICKET'**

In the sense that the tacit partnership of Hattersley and Kinnock had come to symbolise a new spirit of unity, and largely through Hattersley initially, the goal of reform, the election of the 'dream ticket' was itself a major aspect of the transformation. The victory symbolised a break with the past and this, in itself, encouraged a greater receptiveness to change. The *New Statesman*, for example, recognised a different atmosphere at conference, a strong sense of a fresh start which "positively radiated comradliness" (*The New Statesman*, 7th October 1983).

However, the election also became a cause of further transformation in a number of other ways.

Firstly, the high level of support won by the 'dream ticket' in all sections of the electoral college surprised many and thus promoted the notion that the demand for change was greater than had been realised. Hattersley scored a massive victory over Meacher for the deputy leadership post, gaining just over 67% of the electoral college compared to the latter's 27.886% (Labour Party 1983a: 29). Hattersley practically swept the board in the union and PLP section although the result was far closer in the CLPs (Labour Party 1983a: 29). But even in this final section the fact that Hattersley achieved the greatest number of votes was a surprise considering that the CLPs had shown themselves to be solidly behind Tony Benn's bid for the Deputy Leadership in 1981 and that some had expected Meacher to win 75% of the constituency section (Tribune, 5 August 1983). While in the leadership post itself, Kinnock won 71.272% of the electoral college against 19.288% for Hattersley, 6.303% for Heffer, and 3.137% for Shore; Kinnock also gained a healthy majority in each *section* of the college (Labour Party 1983a; 29). Thus the extent of the victory only served to promote the notion that the time was ripe for change.

Secondly, the election of Kinnock himself was a cause of transformation. This was so not only in the sense that he had come to represent the new approach of modernisation but also in the sense that he harboured, even at this early stage, plans of major reform.

It has been generally accepted that Kinnock's personal role in the transformation of Labour was, in part, based upon his own gradual conversion to the cause of reform over the years following his election as leader. Hughes and Wintour (1990) see the 1987 defeat as the



personal turning-point for Kinnock, while Shaw (1994) identifies the 1985 conference as the point from which Kinnock went on the offensive over Party reform. Even Heffernan and Marqusee (1992) who portray Kinnock as a first-class betrayer of his radical roots suggest that his transformation into a reforming leader was a gradual evolution:

Kinnock did not become leader with a comprehensive and conscious strategy for turning the Party to the right. What came to be known as "Kinnockism" emerged, haltingly, out of a confluence of pressures and counter-pressures (Heffernan and Marqusee 1992; 43).

However, while all these authors are right to indicate the gradual way in which Kinnockism developed, this was a result of the fact that the Party itself was undergoing a painful evolutionary development during the 1980s and that a huge variety of complex interactions were taking place as part of this slow process of transformation. Kinnock himself, on the other hand, along with a handful of his closest associates, was clear from the beginning about the depth of the change he wished to undertake:

... the purpose of running (for the leadership) ... was to secure changes in policy, in discipline but most basically in the mind-set in the character of the Party as it existed in 1983. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say as it *appeared* to exist - because the huge majority of the membership of the Party was as sane and related to reality as it ever was. But we'd been through the "cultural revolution" as it were and so a lot of that had to be changed (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

However, the new leader was aware that he could not at that point announce a radical overhaul of the Party. He has stated:

Without long preparation and a variety of actions to push and persuade people and organisations into changed positions, the *status quo* - or something worse than that - would have prevailed (Kinnock 1994b).

Kinnock was constrained by the power of the Bennite wing which still had a number of adherents on the NEC, at conference and amongst union leaderships. Furthermore, even those who would ultimately come to support him still remained to be convinced that major reform was viable or necessary; individuals such as David Blunkett, Michael Meacher and Robin Cook, whose process of conversion to wholesale reform was to be halting and gradual. This was displayed clearly in the results of the leadership, NEC and Shadow Cabinet elections of 1983. Splits and uncertain political balances remained.

The leadership election showed that a split between the PLP and the CLPs still existed - with 142 out of 209 MPs voting differently to their constituencies (The Times, 5 October 1983); support for Hattersley as Leader by the parliamentarians being the most common difference between the two blocs. It also became common knowledge, that the new Leader had achieved an incredibly low vote from the members of the outgoing Shadow Cabinet (The Guardian, 4 October 1983; The Times, 4 October 1983). A clear sign that he had yet to win the backing of the most senior and powerful figures within the PLP.

Indeed of the fifteen MPs elected to the *new* Shadow Cabinet in October, only five had voted for Kinnock, while nine had voted for Shore or Hattersley (Eric Heffer having voted for

himself). Furthermore, none of the five who won the most votes in the Shadow Cabinet elections had voted for the eventual leadership contest victor. As such, Kinnock's hands were largely tied in relation to his front bench appointments: he did have the benefit of being able to choose well-established parliamentarians and front-bench figures for all the senior posts in the Shadow Cabinet (Interview with Kinnock 1994a) but none of these had voted for him as leader. So, although the younger and more radical figures of Robin Cook, John Prescott and Michael Meacher (all of whom had in fact voted for Kinnock) won a place on the front bench, the weighty portfolios of Shadow Chancellor, Trade and Industry, Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Employment and Defence went respectively to Roy Hattersley, Peter Shore, Gerald Kaufman, Denis Healey, John Smith and Jon Silkin. Prescott had in fact won sixth place *above* Jon Silkin but he had to settle for the transport portfolio (Labour Party 1983a: 346-350; The Guardian, 1 November 1983; The Times, 1 November 1983).

The Shadow Cabinet elections also reaffirmed the split between the PLP and CLPs, which had been highlighted in the leadership contest. While Gerald Kaufman, Giles Radice, John Smith, and Barry Jones were elected safely to the front bench, they all failed, by a wide margin, to win seats on the constituency section of the NEC. From the radical wing of the Party Jo Richardson, who gained great CLP backing in the NEC elections - 321,000 votes - achieved only 56 votes from the MPs in the Shadow Cabinet elections (The Labour Party 1983a: 99-100; The Guardian, 1 November 1983; The Times, 1 November 1983). Tribune dedicated an editorial to the topic and, while partly blaming the Campaign and Tribune Groups' failure to agree joint slates for the radicals' poor performance in the Shadow Cabinet elections, attacked the PLP as a whole, stating that:

The overwhelming message of the elections ... is that as far as the Parliamentary Labour Party is concerned, it is business as usual. Neil Kinnock faces exactly the same problems as Michael Foot. The PLP will continue as it has done for the past four years of opposition to ignore the wishes of the party in the country (Tribune, 4 November 1983).

Despite the differences between the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet elections, the former, which occur only three and a half weeks before the latter, did not produce a certain political balance. Neither the radical wing nor the revisionists could claim to have captured an outright majority on Kinnock's first NEC. Nigel Williamson, soon to replace Chris Mullin as Editor of Tribune, estimated that left and right had twelve votes each (Williamson 1983)<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> However, such assessments were almost always immediately redundant as the definitions of left and right and the affiliations of various individuals were to become so much more complex over the next few years. The problems in making such assessments at this stage in the transformation is one of the first indications that understanding Labour's development as primarily the result of a battle between left and right is a simplified analysis. As was suggested in chapter three, the affiliations of different individuals and groups within the Party is better characterised as individual examples of positions on a variety of spectra which constantly transect one another. To put it another way labelling various individuals or groups as 'left' 'hard left', 'soft left' and 'right' does not adequately indicate the diversity of opinions held by such individuals or groups who may fall under the same label. However, the problem for any analyst of this period is that the cogency of the left and the right was actually in the process of collapse and as such the notion of a simple left-right spectrum gradually *becomes* less valid and as such cannot be rejected completely especially for the earlier years under consideration. As a result, as the reader may have noticed, I have opted for a terminological halfway-house having employed the less than perfect alternatives of 'moderate' and 'Bennite'/'radical'. These labels must be understood as narrowly as possible to indicate broad attitudes to the most general policy direction of the Party with Bennites opting for a more ambitious, radical socialist agenda and moderates preferring instead a more limited, mixed economy approach. Those active within one of these wings certainly did not always agree with each other over matters such as internal reforms, race, Militant, women's rights,

Thus, despite Kinnock's plans he clearly saw that the uncertain political balance on the NEC and the broader "mind-set" of the Party would mean his ambitious reform project would have to be incremental and strategic.

As a result, Kinnock's grander plans were kept quiet, to be gradually unleashed as and when the opportunity presented itself. In the meantime he had to be happy with a small coterie of confidantes. Kinnock commented

... some of the agenda could be announced, some of it couldn't be announced because it would have shattered everything. So I had my own private agenda (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

Kinnock was clearly a man with his own plans, who had learned to keep his own counsel until the time was right. He had become over the two years preceding his election a type of free-floating figure, popular in the CLPs, clearly favoured by the unions, but with no factional alliances. Although he was seen as a figure of the radical wing by much of the media, he had not been on any slate when elected to the Shadow Cabinet and the NEC (Kinnock 1994a). His decision to abstain in the second round vote for Tony Benn's bid for deputy leader and thus

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and a whole range of other issues which in many ways were just as, if not more important than the details of policy. Furthermore, I have used the term 'soft left' to refer broadly to the burgeoning group of members who began to search for an alternative policy and strategic approach to that broadly pursued by the Bennites/radicals and the moderates. This group's nature, development and identity is explored exhaustively in this thesis being one of the most significant causes, aspects and effects of the more general transformation of the Party.

scupper that candidate's chances had left him irreparably out of favour with that group. As James Curran wrote in 1983:

Only a year ago, he was treated as a near-leper at a mass Tribune rally at Labour's annual conference because he was held responsible ... for the narrow defeat of Tony Benn (Curran 1983a).

Similarly, many on the moderate wing of the PLP had little love for Kinnock (see chapter eight), regarding his previous associations with the radical wing with suspicion and feeling that he was simply not 'up to the job' (Interviews with following: Barron 1994; Edmonds 1994; Gould 1994; Hain 1994; Haworth 1995). a hostility which had already forced Foot to withdraw his decision to appoint Kinnock as employment spokesman (see chapter one). While the new 'soft left', that was to become such an important source of support throughout the Party for Kinnock was still in the process of development. This free-floating leader never gained a firm mooring in any formal or informal organised group of activists or supporters; he trusted and admired his closest associates (Interview with Kinnock 1994a), especially those who worked in his office but apart from this his distance from any major grouping of the Party had begun in 1981 and was never seriously rectified.

In this context, it is easier to understand how Kinnock could have developed his own views about the necessity of reform during the two years prior to his election and kept them largely to himself unable and maybe unwilling to share them in any detail with anybody but those he trusted most profoundly.

Of course, one cannot take Kinnock's own word as proof that he had grand plans of reform from the earliest days but within the context of the other evidence presented below of major initiatives on campaigning, organisation and policy occurring between October 1983 and March 1984 (see below), it would seem probable that he was committed to reform before his leadership election.

The soft left in which the election of the 'dream ticket' promoted change related to the fact that the election of the two reform-minded figures to the leadership constructed a group within the Party that was to become a focus of change for Labour. This group was the 'core leadership' made up principally of Kinnock, Hattersley and Charles Clarke who was appointed head of Kinnock's own office. This 'core' was committed to a major overhaul of the Party from the earliest days of the leadership. As the leader himself commented, with reference to his own private agenda of reform:

only one or two people knew about it, Charles Clarke pre-eminently because he was by far my closest confidante right throughout. ... (N)ot surprisingly, there was a lot of coincidence there, I quickly discovered, with Roy Hattersley's view of affairs (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

As such this core leadership became a major cause of the transformation positioned as it was at the heart of contingent political, institutional and ideological developments within the Party.

Therefore for these reasons, the election of Kinnock alone and the election of Kinnock jointly with Hattersley were clearly themselves key causes, aspects and effects of the transformation.

It is implicit in the existing literature that the election of the new leadership was significant for the transformation but only in the sense that these were the figures who ultimately carried-out the transformation. The above has shown, in contrast to this literature, that the election of Kinnock and his deputy was a far more significant cause of the transformation, both in symbolic and practical political terms, than much of the Party and movement may have realised at the time. This also has important implications for the complexity of the transformation. By showing that Kinnock had already set himself on the course of radical reform, the above places a stronger emphasis upon the more complex Party-wide causal processes of transformation rather than the simpler idea of personal move towards acceptance of a reform agenda during the 1980s as causes of change. Of course, a further and earlier causal factor has also been identified.

We can also see here a relatively straightforward inter-retroaction. The wish for some sort of reform in the Party following the 1983 defeat clearly helped in the election of Kinnock and the 'dream ticket'. However, it was that election which itself gave a more concrete potential to the wish for reform and an actuality to the reform process itself, thus enhancing desire for and moves towards reform in the Party. Of course, the growth in such a reforming approach strengthened and encouraged the core leadership to embark upon its incremental reform project. A move which in itself again enhanced the Party-wide support for reform (see conclusion).

However, we must be aware of the further complexity implied by this inter-retroaction. The consistently remodified modifiers involved in this inter-retroactive processes are not solely those of reform enhancement. The election of the 'dream ticket' and the inter-retroactive boost this gave to reform also provided the context within which conflict and schism were to



occur between those who supported reform, those who opposed it and those who were forming a 'soft left'. This disturbance was to retroact back onto the core leadership and the nature of the reforming process itself. Complex interactions which are dealt with below especially in chapters five and six.

## **TRADE UNION TRANSFORMATION**

Another central feature of the early days of the new leadership that became a cause, aspect and effect of the transformation in the Party was the change and the dispute that occurred within the trade union movement over 1983 and into early 1984.

The reforming project of 'new realism' was sweeping the trade union movement well-before the Labour Party began to undergo its own transformation. This was most clearly displayed at the TUC congress that met in early September of 1983. Changes to the rules which governed the election of TUC General Council enhanced a shift towards 'new realism' on the governing body and saw a series of prominent radicals lose their seats (*The Guardian*, 7 September 1983; *The Times*, 7 September 1983). Although the 'new realist' victory was not quite as overwhelming as initially thought, the congress did alter policy in a number of areas. It voted to end the boycott of talks on industrial relations law with the government (*The Guardian*, 7 September 1983; *The Times*, 7 September 1983), condemned political strikes (*The Times*, 7 September 1983), agreed that Polaris should go in multi-lateral negotiations (*The Times*, 9 September 1983) and, maybe most significantly, demanded a comprehensive review of TUC policy (*The Guardian*, 8 September 1983; *The Times*, 7 September 1983).

As with the disputes in the Labour Party during 1984 and 1985 (see chapter five), the 'new realism' movement developed into a conflict over whether trade unions should continue using the strategy of direct action to achieve its goals.

In particular there was an intense battle at this early stage over whether the TUC should support unlawful action taken by the NGA against the Messenger Group of companies based in Warrington. Len Murray, the TUC General Secretary only just survived a close vote on the issue by the General Council (*The Guardian*, 15 December 1983), the TGWU ignored the decision and reaffirmed its support for the NGA, and the NGA itself split. (*The Guardian*, 15 December 1983; *The Times*, 15 December 1983).

Similar problems were causing division in Scargill's NUM itself. The miners' union was already organising an overtime ban that would ultimately escalate into the year-long strike. However, support for the ban and for the general approach of the NUM leadership was far from unanimous. In the election for General Secretary of the Union, John Walsh, the candidate who stood on a ticket of "negotiation not confrontation" came within 3.5% of beating Scargill loyalist, Peter Heathfield (*The Guardian*, 25 January 1984; *The Times*, 23 January 1984).

'New realism' like Kinnockism was defined in opposition to the direct action strategy of figures such as Scargill and was seen by its supporters as a strategy of survival. Just as the Party was developing a response to the shock of the 1983 defeat, so the trades unions were responding to a longer series of shocks that had beset them ever since 1979. According to one senior union leader speaking on the causes of 'new realism'

... it was the recession, it was the attack on trade union values, the fact that we were really getting the wrong end of the argument. We were arguing in favour of democracy but against the government's particular flavour of democracy for the unions and that's not a very easy argument to win ... And we took a beating in 81, 82, 83 in terms of membership, redundancies everywhere, blue chip companies going down day by day - that does go to the soul a bit. So anybody who suggested that there had to be a better way than this ... was going to get a hearing (Interview with Edmonds 1994).

As a result, there was a growing sense of common cause between Kinnock and a new tranche of union leaders - figures who would take up their positions over the next two years. Of course there were major leaders in the trade unions who were either sceptical or downright hostile to the new direction the unions and the Party were taking - most notably Arthur Scargill of the NUM but there was a perceptible shift in the political complexion of union leaderships. "Opinion formers" (Interview with Mortimer 1994) on the TUC General Council who had been at least tolerant of and willing to work with the radical wing of the Party such as Jack Jones, Frank Cousins, Hugh Scanlon, Ted Hurle in the GMBATU, Terry Parry of the fire brigades union, and Doug Grieve of the tobacco workers were coming to the end of their working lives in the early eighties and in many cases were being replaced by a new more aggressive type of reformer. These people felt they recognised a crisis in the Labour movement and saw reform as a matter of urgency if the movement was to be saved. Central to this group were Norman Willis of the TUC, John Edmonds of the GMB, Sam McCluskie of the NUS, and Alex Kitson of the TGWU (Interviews with the following: Edmonds 1994; Warburton 1995; Mortimer 1994). It was this mood of crisis combined with a new reforming

zeal within the unions that was to provide Kinnock with a greater freedom to change policy and organisation than might otherwise have been the case for a leader of the Party in opposition. As David Warburton, a senior union officer, has stated:

... we'd been knocked all over the place by Maggie; we wanted a Labour government and this was why Kinnock was given a much freer licence. Some trade unions were getting desperate, their membership was collapsing because they were one-industry unions. I don't mean just the NUM ... Jimmy Knapp could see it in the railway industry, the post office unions could see it happening, the civil service unions, the teachers. ... So Neil was given much more licence than Callaghan or even Wilson (Interview with Warburton 1995).

This is a view confirmed by John Edmonds who observed that

... there was a very, very strong feeling - very strong - that we had to give Kinnock in policy terms what he wanted ... (Interview with Edmonds 1994).

Thus the shift towards 'new realism' in the trade union movement is not only significant in that it indicates the degree to which ideas of moderation and reform had permeated the labour movement prior to Kinnock's election. It also provided a vital source of power for Kinnock to set about his project of change. In particular, a group of supportive union leaders would be

vital if Kinnock was to win the backing of conference by ensuring that the union block vote was behind him. However, as is shown in the next chapter, it took the defeat of the Miners' Strike to make "new realism" a genuinely dominant force within the trade unions and thus to ensure that Kinnock could rely wholly on the support of enough leaders to win conference votes.

Again, as with much of the material presented in this chapter, the existing literature does not identify the significance of this early reforming momentum within the TUC for later change within the Labour Party. Only Minkin deals with this early phase of 'new realism' in any detail but he, understandably considering the focus of his work, understands the election of the 'dream ticket' as enhancing broader movement unity within this atmosphere of reform (Minkin 1991: 136). This in itself raises some interesting inter-retroactive possibilities with the move to 'new realism' at the Congress promoting the election of the 'dream ticket' which in turn enhances unity which itself provides a more fertile base for further reform both in the Party and the unions which thus consolidates and legitimises the thrust of 'new realism' and Kinnock's reforms which enhances Kinnock's and reforming union leaders' power and thus enhances movement unity and so on.

## **THE NEW STRATEGIC THINKING**

Eric Shaw (1994) has identified a particular approach to campaigning within the Party which he calls the 'New Strategic Paradigm' or the 'New Strategic Thinking' and which he sees as becoming a dominant strain of thought within the Party leadership and amongst its strategists in the Shadow Communications Agency thus promoting major changes in campaigning

strategy and Party organisation during the 1980s. Shaw characterises this New Strategic Thinking as a

set of interlinked propositions and maxims about the nature of electoral conduct, campaigning and communications (1994: 59).

Shaw describes the New Strategic Thinking as consisting of five main components: a certain electoral model which saw electoral appeal relying upon the projection of a trustworthy Party; the active projection of an admired leader and policies consonant with the ideas and values of the voter; a shift away from grass-roots campaigning to the use of television to transmit campaign messages; an appeal based on emotion and image manipulation rather than rational persuasion; an attempt to 'sell' the Party's image and policies to the middle-ground, floating voter; and an attempt to set the agenda by increasing the saliency of issues such as health and education which were regarded as issues 'belonging' to Labour; (1994: 59-62).

Hughes and Wintour (1990) also identify, in a less rigid way, the development of a highly-professionalised, media-oriented style of campaigning in a chapter they entitle "Glitznost". Hughes and Wintour see this approach as being the brain-child of Peter Mandelson and his Shadow Communications Agency. As such they regard the New Strategic Thinking as developing only after 1985 when Mandelson was appointed Director of Campaigns and Communications and when the SCA was established. However, a study of the early days of the leadership shows that there were certain developments which caused this aspect of the transformation well-before 1985 and also displays that the necessary changes in *value* that would make the New Strategic Thinking appealing were already occurring soon after Kinnock's election as leader. This stretching of the temporal line once again introduces

more causal processes into our explanation of the transformation and thus complexifies our approach. This, however, can only be achieved if author and reader are careful to acknowledge that the following arguments do not supersede those of Shaw and Hughes and Wintour but instead augments them. In this sense, the following does not claim that the 1983-4 period was the origin of the New Strategic Thinking but that both 1983-4 *and* 1987 were important points of development in the transformation of Labour's campaigning strategy.

One of Kinnock's first acts as Leader, in fact on the actual day of his election, was to appoint Patricia Hewitt as the press and broadcasting assistant in the Leader's office. As General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, Hewitt had been credited with managing to raise the profile of the pressure group with skill and imagination (The Times, 3 October 1983). Over the years she was to become one of Kinnock's closest aides, ultimately being appointed Policy Director, and becoming very closely identified with the spirit and development of all the Kinnockite reforms. Her employment was a clear sign that change in media relations was firmly on the new leader's agenda.

Soon after Hewitt's appointment, Vincent Hanna, a senior BBC political correspondent, acted as a go-between for Labour and approached John Gau, who had recently left his job as Head of Current Affairs at the corporation, and asked if he would be willing to produce Labour's party political broadcasts and generally improve its television image (Interview with Gau 1994). Gau agreed and in those first two years of Kinnock's leadership Gau, Hewitt and the Party's Director of Information, Nick Grant, were to set about energetically providing the Party with a new approach to broadcasting that was professional and imaginative and in many ways bore a close resemblance to the approach of Mandelson and the SCA.

Gau insisted that the party political broadcasts be produced with a decent budget, a fully professional crew and an experienced and creative director. Gau also resisted the old style of broadcast which was based in a studio with two or three leading figures talking straight to camera. Instead he persuaded actors and members of the public to provide endorsements for the Party. He also tried to improve the Party's respectability by having businessmen and women appear in the broadcasts. But it was a measure of how far Labour's image had collapsed that most of the Labour-supporting businesspeople that were found by Gau's researcher refused to appear for fear of how it might affect the standing of their firms (Interview with Gau 1994).

With his conditions met Gau's first production focused specifically on Neil Kinnock as a new leader with youth, affability and authority on his side. Its triumphant style, emphasis on Kinnock and soaring musical score made it an influential forerunner of the famous election broadcast of 1987 that was directed, on a much larger budget, by Hugh Hudson and which has often been regarded as the zenith of the New Strategic Thinking approach.

Gau also used an union-owned studio to "train" some of the Shadow Cabinet members in television manners. The politicians were advised to have a clear message, never be on the defensive and to carefully prepare what they planned to say - advice that is now commonplace. Ironically, despite the fact that the leader, in the early days of his office, took a deep interest in the new campaign work, Kinnock refused to do the training. This was a handicap for, as Gau acknowledges, although the new leader had a good television personality, he had a very strong tendency to be verbose and thus confuse his message. As Gau puts it, Kinnock "never really cracked" television interviewing (Interview with Gau 1994).



The wish for improved campaigning and a more efficient Party organisation also inspired the production of an influential paper by a working group of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC 1983a). The paper spoke of the "real urgency about the need to reform and modernise the Party" (LCC 1983a: i). It called for a major shift in attitudes towards taking campaigning seriously by using a focused strategy that took a leaf out of the Conservative's TV-friendly approach. It stated

We need to be a missionary organisation rather than a conclave of the chosen. Everything we do should reflect that (LCC 1983a: 3).

Most fundamentally the paper called for the establishment of a new senior committee specifically dedicated to campaigning which would devise a medium-term election strategy into which all major Party spokesman would be expected to integrate their activities (LCC 1983a: 2). It also called for a considerable staff and a full-time campaigns officer to support and implement the committee's work. These ideas were reflected in a GMBATU motion accepted at the 1983 conference. The motion spoke of

the urgent need to inject a new professionalism into this crucial aspect (campaigning) of Party organisation (Labour Party 1983a: 36).

The union motion stated that such professionalism could be achieved by a detailed analysis of demographic, social and political causes of defeat; a clear statement of policies; better organisation and use of staff; and the establishment of a campaign committee to conduct centrally directed nation-wide campaigns and which would employ professionals in the field

(Labour Party 1983a: 36). In an almost identical vein, a motion from the AUEW-TASS called for a review of staffing, an increase in the number of Party agents and the establishment of a committee made-up of professional media advisors (Labour Party 1983a: 46). Both motions were passed on a show of hands (Labour Party 1983a: 46; 56).

In contrast, a motion calling for a more traditional nation-wide campaign based upon grass-roots activity such as demonstrations, rallies, meetings and leaflets (Labour Party 1983a: 39-40) was lost by 1,114,000 to 5,599,000 votes (46). A sign of the extent of the shift towards support for a more professional style of campaigning.

Although the reforms of staff structures and roles would take two years before they were fully implemented, Kinnock took-up the idea of the campaign committee and persuaded the October NEC to agree to its establishment as the Campaign Strategy Committee (NEC 2, 26 October 1983: 8-9).

The CSC was charged by the executive with the running of all Labour's campaigns, the development of campaign strategies and the use of professional skills for media presentation. It was also to carry-out a review of the Party's press, publicity, education and campaigning organisations. The NEC discussion paper dealing with the establishment of the CSC stated that the committee would aim to produce

a campaign strategy designed to rebuild Labour's shattered electoral base. Without such a strategy there can be no effective campaigning. With the European elections next June, the need to organise is imperative. The need for urgent action also applies to the local

elections next May and in our readiness to effectively fight any by-elections that might occur (Labour Weekly, 28 October 1983; NEC Proposal SEC/29/10/83).

However, unlike the Shadow Communications Agency, which was established three and a half years later, this was not a body of professional spin doctors and public relations experts. The CSC was made up of the most heavyweight political figures in the Party and the broader labour movement. Drawing on the trade unions, the Shadow Cabinet, and the NEC itself, the Committee included, amongst others, Moss Evans, David Basnett, Terry Duffy, Roy Hattersley, Gerald Kaufman, David Blunkett, Tom Sawyer and, of course, Kinnock himself (The Times, 3 November 1983).

From the wide-ranging brief and the drafting of such powerful figures on to the body, it was clear that the CSC was far more than just another NEC sub-committee. Combined with the fact that Healey and Shore, the old war-horses of the moderate wing, were left off the Committee in favour of far more junior members of the front bench such as Robin Cook and Michael Meacher - it seems that Kinnock was not only keen to gain heavyweight Party and trade union backing for his new style but he was also providing an effective movement-wide base for his professionalisation of the Party's campaigning that was distinct from the uncertain and potentially unstable NEC and from the moderates in the Shadow Cabinet who did not trust Kinnock as leader. The committee was also structured in such a way so that no one section - NEC, Shadow Cabinet or trade union - could gain a majority on its own and use the committee for its own purposes.

A further cause, aspect and effect of the new campaigning styles was the Chesterfield by-election. Like the approach supposedly devised solely by Mandelson, the Chesterfield campaign was run along very centralised lines being primarily controlled by a by-election unit which had just been established at Walworth Road. Although the candidate was hardly a firm supporter of the new leadership (it was, in fact, Tony Benn who had lost his Bristol seat due to boundary changes), the unit immediately implemented a new campaigning approach. The old strategy, devised by Morgan Phillips, through which Labour attempted to set the agenda by holding morning press conferences, was dropped. In response to the recognition that the majority of people now received most of their news information through radio and television, the emphasis was shifted from providing press stories to the construction of picture and sound "bites" which would be more appealing to the broadcasters than a row of talking heads sitting behind a desk (*The Guardian*, 7 February 1984; *The Times*, 27 January 1984). This strategy also had the added advantage of relying on a medium that was legally obliged to provide, at least a semblance of, balanced coverage. This compared with a tabloid press, sections of which either worked closely with Conservative Central Office campaigns or struggled with each other in an effort to portray the Labour Party in an ever more unfavourable light no matter how bizarre and slanderous.

The triumphant moment in this presentation of a new image through skilful media manipulation came when Benn was captured in the full and manipulated glare of the media's attention singing along to Denis Healey's accompaniment on a piano in the corner of a Chesterfield pub. Not only did the scene cry out for copy praising 'harmonious unity' but the atmosphere genuinely seemed to radiate bonhomie and folksy warmth. As Benn noted in his diary, they even managed to sing "here we are again, happy as can be, all good pals and jolly

good company" (Benn 1992: 337). It was a 'PR coup' of which any stalwart of the Shadow Communications Agency could have been proud.

The widening gap between more traditionalist campaigners and those committed to the New Strategic Thinking was also already in evidence during this episode. When it was reported that Peter Tatchell (see chapter one) had been told to stay away from Chesterfield. Tony Benn immediately quashed the story by announcing that Tatchell was welcome and that he had never been told to steer clear of the constituency (The Times, 14 February 1984). Tony Benn commented in his diary:

If I had let that story go unanswered, they would have played the old trick - we'll give you a good press if you repudiate your own people.

Once the press realise they cannot divide

you from your own Party, then they stop trying (Benn 1992: 335).

Benn's approach was clearly that of success through defiance of an irredeemably hostile media, whereas the presiding approach of the New Strategic Thinking was success through seduction and manipulation of the press, television and radio.

The difference in these approaches was highlighted once again immediately after the Tatchell event, when Benn, who was angry about the BBC's Newsnight coverage of the by-election, described the programme's reporter, Vincent Hanna, as the "SDP candidate for Chesterfield" who wanted the Liberal/Alliance candidate to win. Although the issue developed into little more than a personal confrontation between Benn and Hanna a week later, Benn reported that Walworth Road, and Joyce Gould (director of the by-election unit) in particular, were "sunk

in gloom" because Benn had broken "an unspoken alliance between Vincent Hanna and the Party officials" (Benn 1992: 335) - an alliance which it seemed had already borne fruit with the introduction of John Gau to the Party organisation. Such informal understandings and contacts were to become crucial to the campaign staff's ability to put spin on certain events and to have their agenda heard but they were hardly the stuff of Tony Benn's approach.

However, the development of this New Strategic Thinking was only able to win backing and influence because it was constructed alongside and in articulation with other developments in the *values* of the Party. A particularly important development in this respect was that which occurred in relation to the vote-maximisation *value* which had a long, established place in the Party. This *value* was the sense that one of Labour's prime goals must be to increase votes and thus win power. This *value*, akin to the electoralism identified by Miliband, Anderson, Coates and others (see chapter two), began to take on a particularly active form following the defeat of 1983.

The general election campaign had been a painful experience for many members who had faced hostility and embarrassment while canvassing (Interview with Matheson 1994; Interview with O'Mara 1994). This humiliation sponsored a sense that Labour must get its campaigning act together and actively seek votes by "preaching to the unconverted" as Robin Cook put it (Cook 1983). Immediately after the election, this active vote maximisation *value* underwent a process of negative identity construction and influenced a number of leading figures.

The 'constitutive outside' of this *value* was the attitude in the Party that Labour only had to wait to 'take its turn' in government. Robin Cook wrote:

It may be a trifle unfair to blame the late Robert MacKenzie for the failings of Labour's national campaign but, at bottom, the indifference of both its luminaries and activists rested on the assumption that there is a pendulum in the political affairs of men. The alternation of governments throughout the 1960s and '70's, perfectly symbolized by the visual image of the Swingometer, led too many to believe that the first law of electoral support was "what goes down, must come up again (Cook 1983).

Kinnock also saw his role as combating such a view:

I'd started a long time before I was leader ... saying to people, notably those who had been my associates on the left and centre left, "wake-up to the realities that we face and stop trying to kid yourself that we are going to get 'our turn' in the Parliamentary swing door". Because a lot of their attitudes - including those of very reasonable people - emanated from their assumption that the Tories would win, then Labour would get elected next time, then the Tories would be elected next time. Of course, it was nonsense. We'd only had one very short experience of that in the sixties and seventies ... I just thought that was sloppy, innocent, ill-befitting anybody who described themselves as a socialist (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

However, the development of this *active* vote-maximisation *value* demanded a strategy for its fulfilment. It was in satisfying this demand that the New Strategic Thinking became

increasingly influential. However, the articulation between the strategy and the *value* was far from immediate. The main reason for this was that an alternative strategy existed.

The alternative was commonly known as the 'mass party approach'. It suggested that Labour had to build a solid base of support and activists through a combination of internal democratisation, forging links with politically active groups and individuals outside the Party and campaigning based on a forthright vision. This notion had become particularly popular within the LCC and was to be a recurrent theme within the soft left. The idea drew a great deal upon the LCC's origins in 'new agenda' *values* and its related interest in the single-issue politics that began to flourish outside the Party in the 1970s (see chapter five and chapter seven). An influential pamphlet on the issue, published by the LCC in 1981 stated that

If the Labour Party is not to remain on the sidelines ... it has to acknowledge that these (single issue campaigns) are political struggles and act on this. For it is not only the single issue group itself which often refuses to see its own political nature. The Labour Party is so accustomed to defining politics in terms of party meetings and fighting elections that it fails to see the politics going on all around it. Along with changes to make our representatives more accountable, we have also to become part of all this other politics, we have to become a campaigning party and become part of the campaigns which involve so many people already (LCC 1981: 10).

The pamphlet called for a number of specific reforms and changes to facilitate the construction of this mass party which would draw in supporters behind Labour. These



demands included: the forging of closer links between CLPs and "single issue groups"; the establishment of workplace branches; an increase in the size of the CLP section on the NEC; an increase in the womens section on the NEC and changes to the way it was elected; limitation on the powers of patronage held by the leader; the use of an electoral college for election of the leader; CLPs to have a bigger share of votes at conference; and affiliated organisations to have a block vote at conference (8-22). All of these reforms were clearly designed to enhance the power and vitality of the grass-roots members in the CLPs and to make the Party more attractive to new agenda groups and campaigners outside the Party.

Throughout the 1980s the mass party idea remained potent especially within the soft left strand although its nature and demands changed quite radically in response to a series of developments (see chapters six and seven). An article in Tribune by Trevor Fisher, a member of the LCC Executive in the late 1980s, written six years after the mass party pamphlet but referring directly to it, stated that

Among many socialists, the idea of building alliances as a way forward is growing in importance ... People like Bernie Grant have been arguing in favour of alliances with disadvantaged groups like blacks, women and gays (Fisher 1987).

However, in line with the mass party strategy, Fisher asserted that such links had to be forged alongside a democratisation of the Party's structures and their re-building in areas where the Party was weak on the ground.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>The distinction between this mass party approach of the soft left and that of the Bennite wing might not be immediately clear. In fact, one could very well regard this as a goal of that wing

The existence of this alternative strategy for the fulfilment of the active vote-maximisation *value* augments the view of those existing analyses which argue that the transformation was *purely* a rational or common-sense process. It upholds and strengthens Shaw's view that any decisions about campaigning are never self-evident and are always mediated by other factors. It indicates that we cannot understand the transformation as being caused solely by rational calculation, for if there are competing strategies which argue strongly that they will also enhance votes then we must look to other causal factors to explain why the final approach which chosen *was* chosen. In some sense this is what much of this thesis is about: the identification of the *other* multiple causes, beyond those identified by the existing literature, which allowed change to happen in the way it did.

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and to an extent there certainly was an early closeness and cross-fertilisation, illustrated in particular by the initial co-operation during Livingstone's administration of the GLC within which the mass party approach reached the high-point of its influence. The council used its access to large resources to back single-issue and community groups and thus hoped to create firmer links between Labour and the type of politics identified by the mass Party pamphlet of 1981 (for a supportive analysis typical of this approach see Wainwright 1987). But, as this thesis will show, the distinction between the Bennites and the soft left mass party idealists gradually became one of emphasis in three main ways. Firstly, the soft left perspective, increasingly accepting, as it was, of the notion that new means had to be adopted to achieve radical goals (see chapters five and nine), were less emphatic about the need to build popular alliances around rigid policy positions such as support for unilateralism and renationalisation and implacable opposition to the EEC, the market and council house sales. This led to acceptance of the New Strategic Thinking approach alongside the mass party approach (see chapter six and seven). Secondly, an increasing number on the soft left, felt that any broadening of the Party's base would have to include a reform of trade union power through the adoption of OMOV and reduction of the block vote. A move which many on the radical wing firmly opposed and/or felt was the wrong method for democratising the Party (see chapter six). And thirdly, many on the soft left had a greater trust in the ability or willingness of Kinnock to implement the mass party approach (see, for example, Williamson 1986 and chapter six).

The other factors in this case were a series of complex and multiple events over the coming years which ensured that the mass party approach gradually withered as an option while the New Strategic Thinking strengthened its articulation to the active vote-maximisation *value* and thus enhanced its influence (see chapters five, six and seven)

However, at this early stage, we can see that both these strategies brought with them *values* which made them particularly attractive. The New Strategic Thinking, as Shaw has pointed out, drew directly on the personnel and ideas of the advertising industry and as such it developed a *value* of hard-nosed professionalism, a lack of sentimentality, and a no-nonsense business-like approach. This appealed to a number of leading Labour figures, especially the younger generation, who were clearly humiliated by the Party's amateurism and anachronistic style during the 1983 election in the face of the Tories' highly effective campaigning and media manipulation. Robin Cook, who was to become one of the most influential *political* figures on campaigning styles and strategies captured the no-nonsense, business-like aspect of this *value* well when he stated that Thatcher's success had made Labour realise that winning power was a task that would take a whole Parliament and thus triumphantly declared that "the next general election began last Tuesday", the day on which the CSC first met (Cook 1983). While the mass party approach appealed to many within the emerging soft left because while it was a clear strategic answer to the active vote maximisation *value*, it also possessed strong elements of a commitment to building popular, grass-roots movements for fundamental change. In short, the mass party approach still possessed a radical, possibly revolutionary, *value*. And as is detailed in chapter five, many on the soft left came from a background that prized such a *value*.

Thus the active vote-maximisation *value* implied that Labour actually had to turn outwards and actively seek votes. This shift inter-retroacted with the maxims of the New Strategic Thinking and, to a lesser extent, the mass party approach. The two strategies offered a style and a method of actively seeking votes and thus enhanced the cogency of the shift in the vote-maximisation *value* itself, in that the New Strategic Thinking and mass party approach transformed the shift from a wish to a practical reality. While the shift in the vote-maximisation *value* itself provided the ground upon which the new strategies could take root and appear exceptionally salient. An inter-retroaction is clear. The single-mindedness and business-like approach of the New Strategic Thinking, in particular, made active vote-maximisation an unquestioned goal for one influential section of the leadership; this was due, no doubt, in part to the fact that the new thinking was transplanted from the world of advertising where the end, i.e. selling the product, is never questioned. While such enhancement of the importance and potency of active vote-maximisation in turn made the new strategies evermore central and influential themselves. As a result, the New Strategic Thinking and (in a more limited way) the mass party approach, became extremely closely articulated to active vote maximisation in the minds of the core leadership, other leading figures and gradually in the minds of many Party members. In effect these developments are exemplars of the constant and inseparable processes of symbiotic, causal modification (mentioned in chapter two) that occurs between factors linked by articulation. (A link that seems also to have been made in the minds of some analysts by identifying active vote maximisation as synonymous with the New Strategic Thinking to the point where one follows as a simple, rational and common sense consequence of the other - see chapter three.)

All of this thus displays, firstly, that the modernisation of Labour's campaigns and organisation, which was such a central feature of the transformation began to develop in a

period well-before 1985 or 1987 and hence is more complex in its development than was originally thought. Secondly, it shows that a wide range of causes - from the personal appointments made by Kinnock to subtle shifts in the most fundamental *values* of the Party - existed to construct the shift towards new campaigning styles and structures. Finally, it has shown how the inter-retroactive processes implied by negative identity construction and articulation can be brought into our analysis to complexify the explanation of the transformation.

## **POLICY INITIATIVES**

It has been outlined how the leadership contest launched a series of policy reform debates that were to influence the Party throughout its transformation. Consideration of such reform intensified in the weeks following Kinnock's election with a number of areas being publicly earmarked for change and an actual reform process being begun in others. Alongside Kinnock's comments about his own private agenda, these moves indicate that the core leadership planned policy reform from its very earliest days. The extent of these plans is also upheld by the establishment of a new policy-making process very early in the tenure of the Kinnockite leadership.

Considering the fact that the abandonment of unilateralism is usually seen as the most radical achievement of the Policy Review in 1989, it is interesting, in the context of this chapter, to observe the fact that on the day before he was elected leader, Kinnock was already showing his softening on the defence policy. The man who would be leader in only a few hours was alone in abstaining in the pre-conference NEC vote on a motion which stated

that unilateral disarmament by Britain is essential if we are to reclaim our national independence and thus acquire the political influence to lessen international tension, build a nuclear free zone in Europe, strengthen the non-proliferation treaty and ultimately achieve nuclear disarmament world-wide (Labour Party 1983a: 150).

Despite Kinnock's attempts to have the TGWU proposal remitted, the NEC backed it by fourteen votes to eleven (NEC 15, 2 October 1983: 5; *The Times*, 3 October 1983) and the motion was ultimately passed by the conference on a show of hands (Labour Party 1983a: 163).

However, once he had power Kinnock and his core leadership were in a stronger position to make the running on policy reform.

One of the earliest initiatives was taken by Roy Hattersley who, in a speech to the EETPU conference, said that policy areas as wide-ranging as the EEC, defence and home ownership could face reform (*The Guardian*, 9 November 1983; *The Times*, 9 November 1983).

By December, only within a month of these interventions, the new leadership was proposing ways to unify the policy-making process while also wresting it out of the direct control of either the NEC or Shadow Cabinet. A paper drafted by Geoff Bish, head of research at Walworth Road, called for the winding-up of the NEC policy committees and their replacement by a series of Joint Policy Committees made up of six NEC members, six Shadow Cabinet members and selected trade unionists (Bish 1983). The paper also proposed that the NEC delegated its overall control of policy to a joint policy co-ordinating committee.

Interestingly, considering Hattersley's speech, Bish suggested that the areas the committees should review as a matter of priority were council house sales and the EEC (issues which had already been matters of concern during the leadership contest).

These were not minor, uncertain moves. The radical wing realised their importance and in the first of many clashes with the new leader condemned these early decisions as attempts to divert power from the NEC and towards new bodies made up of moderates. On the 11th November, Tribune devoted a disapproving lead story to this shift and described it as "an erosion of accountability to conference" (Tribune, 11 November 1983). One prominent, local activist, a firm supporter of Benn interpreted the two moves on policy and campaigning as a direct attack on the power of the Bennites at the grassroots whose main voice at national level was the NEC and conference:

... the left were still very much in control in the CLPs and local government. So it was clear that Kinnock and his acolytes would do what they could to neutralise this influence through organisational and mechanical means ... it was quite clear that the changes were engineered to remove and nullify any of the force the (local) parties had (Interview with King 1994).

However, these criticisms remained a low grumble as the Party basked in its own and the media's warmth towards the new leader. The proposal on Joint Policy Committees was approved by the NEC by mid-December (NEC 4, 14 December 1983: 9). Come early January Kinnock's confidence was boosted by new polls and announced

our recovery in the opinion polls and in council by-elections has been substantial - even spectacular in some cases (Kinnock 1984a).

The polls were indeed showing that Labour had improved its share of the vote, and by mid-February a Marplan poll gave Labour a lead of 1% (The Times, 22 February 1984)- slim but substantial considering this was the first time the Party had shown any lead since the Falklands conflict.

Buoyed by this, the core leadership intensified the moves towards policy reform that the deputy leader had signalled at the EETPU conference. Aware that his project, "Operation Destroy Illusions" as he privately called it (Interview with Kinnock 1994a) had to be launched with the utmost sensitivity for fear of causing a backlash, Kinnock set about reassuring the Party membership on some issues while simultaneously marking other policies for future change. In late January, Kinnock announced that he might have to revise the pledge to bring unemployment under a million in five years but that he was committed to repealing the Government's trade union legislation. And he made more tentative steps towards altering the defence policy by stating that he might keep Cruise missiles, as leader of a Labour government, if he felt there was a real chance of them being negotiated away in a deal over Soviet SS-20 missiles. And although he confirmed that the scrapping of Polaris would remain as policy, he stated that cuts in conventional forces were difficult while the Party adhered to a non-nuclear policy (The Guardian, 23 January 1984; The Times, 23 January 1984).

The possibility of a major review of policy was hinted at, in a deliberately low-key way, when "Party sources" suggested to the press that commitments to repeal great swathes of Tory legislation would over-burden a Labour-led Parliament and leave a Kinnock government with



no time for its own positive legislation (The Times 7 February, 1984). Such comments, of course, meant that the most complex and ambitious aspects of Tory legislation which Labour had planned to repeal - such as that on public ownership, education and local authorities - might not be totally reversed, consequently implying that Labour's stance on some of these issues would have to be moderated; issues that were, of course, very close to the heart of many Party members. Kinnock himself has acknowledged this early, tentative attempt to launch a reform process:

To some extent it (early policy reform proposals) was a continuation of the view I'd expressed in 80 and 81 about this word 'restoration' of public expenditure. The argument that I offered several times in public was that if what we said about Thatcher and Thatcherism was true - that it was as destructive as we said it was ... the resulting realities had to be recognised and dealt with. The destruction of the wealth-creating base limited our room for manoeuvre and our ability to afford social advances. Now, of course, in the meantime I'd said things in interviews and elsewhere that sustained the idea of public enterprise and public ownership but all the time trying to suggest that we had to recognise the size of the bale of cloth that we were going to be presented with both in terms of resources and time. I wanted Labour people to stop taking what I call the 'magic wand view of politics' which was, to say the least, for socialists - who, above all, are supposed to be rationalists - eccentric. So it was all part of an argument that I'd been making for quite a long time (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

Later in February, Kinnock moved further from the old policy on the EEC than he had in the leadership contest by shifting away from the idea of withdrawal to the aim of reforming the Community from within (Kinnock 1984b). This was followed two days later by the low-key launching of a moderate alternative budget by Roy Hattersley at his Birmingham-Sparkbrook GMC. This deliberately avoided any grand financial commitments and called only for a moderate increase in borrowing and spending (The Guardian, 22 February 1984; The Times, 22 February 1984).

The policy debates of the leadership contest were now becoming actual policy initiatives. Although, at this stage, they were still tentative initiatives they indicate the depth of the core leadership's commitment to reform and are themselves a cause, aspect and effect of transformation. While their status as an aspect of the transformation is obvious (once we refer back to the considerations on a non-epiphenomenal conception of transformation in chapter three), the policy debates' roles as causes and effects should be clarified. They exist as effects in the sense that: they resulted from the agenda set by the leadership contest; they developed directly out of Kinnock's own personal project and vision; they were made possible by the trauma of the 1983 defeat; and they were raised to public attention because of the expectations of the new leadership to make the Party more electable and modern. On the other hand, the early policy debates are also causes because they helped establish the processes of opposition and support to the leadership that were ultimately to allow further change; they established Kinnock's leadership, in its own eyes and in the eyes of others, as a policy-reforming leadership; and they set the tone and agenda for future policy reform (see chapter nine).

With regards to existing literature, it is clear that the analysis above greatly augments previous analyses. None of the existing literature studies the important policy developments in the months immediately following Kinnock's election as leader. As a result, they miss important causes of change and vital indicators which show that the transformation began far earlier, in far more diverse circumstances than is usually presented.

Nevertheless, the disputes that were to flare-up in March over the Miners' Strike, the rates rebellion and Militant and which were to last for a year and a half meant that these policy initiatives were halted and the site of transformation shifted more immediately to the *value* rather than the doctrine of the Party.

## CONCLUSION

The first five months of Kinnock's leadership point clearly to two important augmentations of existing explanations of how and why Labour underwent its great transformation of the 1980s. Firstly, many of the ideas, themes and features of that transformation had already begun development or been launched in some form in those early days. The groundwork was being laid for significant reforms on the policies of home-ownership, defence, EEC membership and, most significantly, the shadow chancellor had outlined a very moderate approach to public borrowing and spending. Furthermore, signs had been given that the repeal of Tory legislation might have to be moderated - a move that would clearly have major consequences for Labour's stance on public ownership, industrial relations, education and local authority structures and powers. The founding of the joint policy committees provide an early indication of Kinnock's intention to go for major reform on policy by by-passing the uncertain NEC and a suspicious Shadow Cabinet. These last two points suggest that a major

overhaul of policy was a distinct possibility in the medium-term future. While the early establishment of the CSC and the by-election unit at Walworth Road combined with the work of John Gau, Patricia Hewitt and Nick Grant and the way in which the Chesterfield campaign was run indicate that, even at this very early stage, major moves were being made to centralise and professionalise the Party's campaigning.

The second implication of this evidence combined with the new interview evidence presented above suggests that Kinnock himself and a small coterie of his closest supporters that included Charles Clarke and Roy Hattersley hoped for such a major overhaul from the very earliest days of the new leadership. These two aspects negate the suggestion that the centrepiece of the process of transformation was the changing attitude of Kinnock and his closest supporters themselves. This idea is particularly pronounced in Hughes and Wintour (1990) who see the 1987 election defeat as the catalyst in Kinnock's reform programme. This, of course, is not to say that the process was not gradual and, at times, painful and tortuous. Because Kinnock and a few others had a clear vision of what they wanted does not mean that others shared that view at such an early stage. It also means that the shift towards change was not a sudden cathartic moment, for Kinnock it had its roots in a gradual shift and estrangement from the radical wing prior to his election; for a great mass of the Party membership it was a similarly gradual process that occurred throughout the 1980s but was particularly pronounced between 1983 and 1989. As this observation suggests and as will continue to be displayed below, the transformation was a much more complex inter-retroaction of diverse and uneven elements than has previously been suspected.

This chapter also casts further light on existing analyses in another way. Referring back to the various causes outlined in chapter three, we can see those causes already coming in to play.

The personal factors, identified as so important by analysts of this period, were clearly already present and interactive. These factors existed in the form of Kinnock, Hattersley and other members of the core leadership, such as Charles Clarke, who had been placed in positions of power either by election or appointment and who were personally committed to reform. As such we see a central aspect of the transformation developing, at this point, out of the personal drive and agenda of Kinnock and the core leadership themselves in the form of cautious policy pronouncements and energetic organisational and campaigning reform.

However, we have seen already that this had implications for institutional causes in that Kinnock, from an extremely early stage, encouraged a shift away from the NEC, and moderate political elements in the Shadow Cabinet, by establishing the Joint Policy Committees and the Campaign Strategy Committee. Furthermore, these factors are overlaid by the unfolding of certain contingent-political developments, in particular the growing hostility of the Bennite wing towards Kinnock's approach and, as is explored below, the developing importance of the soft left approach.

But this is not to deny the causal role, alongside all of these factors, of ideological elements: the history of electoralism has already begun to weigh heavily through the increasing potency of a particularly active version of the vote-maximisation *value*, which exists in an inter-retroactive relationship with the New Strategic Thinking and the mass party approach. This inter-retroaction has been particularly implied by the use of the concept of articulation in relation to those elements. We can also see the implications of inter-retroaction provided by the negative identity construction of the active vote maximisation *value* in relation to the 'constitutive outside' of a fatalistic "our turn will come" approach to labour's problems.

Furthermore, within this context, this analysis has established the prime 'fuzzy concept' of *value* as a key element in our explanation of the transformation.

Thus only six months after Kinnock's elections there is already a high quantity of developments and factors contributing towards the process of transformation. This alone enhances complexity and further indicates how a *sole* or *sole* set or origin/s for the transformation cannot be placed as late as 1987 or even 1985. However, we have already identified one inter-retroaction in the form of the relationship between the new strategic thinking and the vote-maximisation *value*, we can now add to this. This inter-retroaction is itself inter-retroacting with another. The establishment of new bodies and projects, such as the Joint Policy Committees, the Walworth Road by-election unit, Gau's broadcasting initiative, and the Campaign Strategy Committee empowered individuals committed to the active vote-maximisation *value*, and to a lesser extent, the new strategic thinking by introducing those individuals into the bodies and projects and by briefing those bodies and projects along those lines. As such, the very establishment of these bodies and projects enhanced the potency and power of the active vote-maximisation *value* and the New Strategic Thinking, which in turn enhanced the standing of those individuals committed to the active vote-maximisation *value* and the New Strategic Thinking which, of course, enhanced the potency of these *values* and *maxims*. The enhancement of these two latter factors ensured that their own inter-retroaction was that much more intense and potent.

However, as was mentioned above, we must avoid falling into the trap of assuming that an inter-retroaction is always a process of mutual enhancement. Clearly, at least at this stage, these inter-retroactions were confined largely to various sections of the leadership. As the troubles of 1984 and 1985 showed, other processes of development were underway, which

themselves inter-retroacted with processes in the wider Party and movement to create not only mutual enhancement but also deep schisms and disarticulations. These will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

Complexity has been deepened considerably in this chapter. The variety of causes, aspects and effects of the transformation has been widened by the stretching of the temporal and spatial line. Inter-retroaction has been displayed as active between specific events, between the different spheres of the political, personal, ideological and institutional, and inter-retroactive links between the grander themes represented in each chapter has begun to be constructed with bracketed chapter referrals suggesting that the early days of the leadership were causes and effects of changes in Party structure, the disputes of 1984-1985, new agenda issues, the leadership challenge following the 1987 election and policy reform. We have also begun to observe the constant symbiotic, causal modifications of articulation and negative identity construction.

In effect the construction of a complex inter-retroactive context for the transformation of the Labour Party in the 1980s has begun with its identification of multiple causes, aspects and effects and its implicit but strategic failure to identify *all* such causes, aspects and effects.

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## THE MINERS, MILITANT AND THE RATES

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The popular view of the 1984-1985 period in Labour's transformation is that of a "wasted year" (see, for example, Hughes & Wintour 1990). The intense internecine strife which characterised the Miners' Strike, the rates rebellion and the Militant affair means that these factors are usually seen as events which distracted the Party from developing its policies and concentrating upon the presentation of a more moderate and united face to the electorate.

However, as will be shown below, this analysis fails to see that it was the disputes and defeats of this period that transformed many views and *values* within Labour and simultaneously shifted the contingent political balance of the Party. As has been mentioned above, most analysts have located the real period of transformation as the two years after the 1987 election, specifically the Policy Review. But compared to the first half of the 1980s, the Policy Review was an incredibly smooth process inspiring little genuine opposition - even the abandonment of the unilateralist defence policy in 1989 was accepted in resignation rather than fought as the betrayal of a fundamental socialist creed (see chapter nine). For such an easy shift to have occurred, something must have happened since the massive ideological conflicts of the early 1980s to end the rivalry within the Party. That 'something' was, in large part, the transformatory disputes of 1984 and 1985 - without those the Policy Review could not have happened.



By arguing this point, we effect a further stretching of both the temporal and spatial line of cause bringing into play a number of factors not usually considered as directly relevant to the transformation of the Party. This move towards complexity is further enhanced by the fact that this period, in which debate and self-questioning was at a peak, led to a considerable degree of multiplication thus introducing even more factors into our explanation of Labour's transformation. (For the sake of clarity, multiplication is the process whereby the analyst engaged in the search for complexity displays how more categories, are required than has been usually accepted by existing literature, for the explanation of a particular phenomena.) Furthermore, a striking effect of the disputes that beset that Party during 1984 and 1985 was the transformation they brought about within the realm of *value* and thus we are also able to introduce this particularly salient "fuzzy category".

The chapter introduces further fresh empirical and analytical points which also have their origins in the search for complexity.

New evidence is provided which supports the view that the Party and the movement as a whole were split over the Miners' Strike. This contrasts with the analysis presented by the radical wing of the Party and by Heffernan and Marqusee (1992: 49) that the strike enjoyed almost unanimous support throughout the Party and the movement and that only the Party leadership were lukewarm about the dispute. Such evidence upholds a more complex situation whereby there was a *multiplication* of attitudes towards the strike and towards direct action as a strategy in this period rather than a much simpler polarisation between leadership and membership.

Evidence is also presented which emphasises that the soft left grouping within the Party, which began to develop more fully at this time, grew as much out of a dissatisfaction with Kinnock's attitude to the Miners' Strike as with Scargill's leadership of the strike. This contrasts strongly with Hughes and Wintour (1990) and Heffernan and Marqusee (1992) and Smith (1992a) who portray the development of the soft left in terms of a mass renunciation of Bennism and rapid accommodation with Kinnock. This is part of an overall approach to the soft left in this chapter which shows them to be a far more diverse, fragmented and gradually emerging force than is assumed in the existing literature. In essence, the soft left, which is generally shown to be fundamentally based upon cold, rational calculation about the need to win votes or advance careers in previous analyses (see section on realignment in chapter three), is presented here as a more complex development with deep roots and multiple origins.

It is also in this chapter that the complex development of *values* really begins to occur. Evidence is presented to show that Kinnock made particularly powerful use of the 'defend the people' *value* and, most importantly, he made far more effective use of this *value* than the radical wing and the supporters of direct action. In this context it is argued that during this period, an important shift occurred whereby increasing numbers in the Party began to accept an articulation between the 'defend the people' *value* and Kinnock's own particularly active interpretation of the vote maximisation *value*. It is argued, in particular, that Kinnock's policy on the rates rebellion - the 'dented shield' - was a cause, aspect and effect of this articulation and of a disarticulation of the 'defend the people' *value* from the direct action strategy. Specific evidence for this comes from an analysis of Kinnock's 1985 conference speech, where it is shown that the efficacy of the central part of this speech comes from its powerful use of the 'defend the people' *value*. Nowhere in the existing literature is this approach taken or is this whole period given the importance it is given here. In particular, it is shown that the

complex confluence of articulations and disarticulations of *values* and strategies that occurred during the 1984-1985 period not only promoted further transformation but gave that transformation its shape.

Evidence is also presented which suggests that the forthright attack on Militant, launched by Kinnock, had its origins amongst figures on the soft left of the Party. This contrasts with the existing literature and with belief at the time, which assumed the assault originated either with the core leadership or with the moderate wing of the Party. In fact, new evidence is presented which shows that views on the issue of Militant, prior to Kinnock's decision, were quite diverse and multiple and that even in the moderate wing, there were a number of figures who were wary of such a powerful assault.

Finally, it is also asserted that the central 'alliance' between the soft left and the moderates which the existing literature has argued was the cornerstone of Kinnock's power and the success of his reform process was more complex than is usually accepted. It is shown that, in fact, there existed a more variable and fragile 'dual association' on the NEC and throughout the Party between figures on the soft left and the core leadership and between moderates and the core leadership. In fact, the relationship between the soft left and the moderates is shown to be acrimonious and competitive resulting from a number of causes. This observation is new and is important because it enhances the complexity of the transformation as it happened at the core of the Party, and it allows us to understand further complex dynamics that occurred later (see, in particular, chapters eight and nine).

Overall, this chapter shows how transformation in the Party developed out of a highly complex confluence of factors involving the articulation and disarticulation of *values* and

strategies, and the development of convoluted interactions between fragmented and hybrid bodies of Party members and leading figures. Maybe, most importantly, it shows that transformation is not a simple process of the victory of one grouping and the defeat of another (all too often transformation is presented as the simple victory of Kinnock's vision - Hughes and Wintour 1990 and Heffernan and Marqusee 1992 are the clearest exponents of this view) but that the modes of resistance to change and the very battles themselves fundamentally shape the transformation itself. This approach directly results from an emphasis upon complexity which is inherently suspicious of straightforward and simple explanations and always searches for further causes and processes of change.

### **TRANSFORMING THE 'DEFEND THE PEOPLE' *VALUE***

A *value* which underwent major transformation in this troubled period was that which held that one of Labour's broad roles must be to defend the rights and welfare of the most vulnerable and the most exploited. This *value* is clearly present throughout the Labour Party's history and in its ideological precepts. It is a largely self-evident feature of the Party's development, being a *value* to which most, even all, Party members would adhere. As such little purpose would be served by discovering historical examples of this *value* as an active element. Instead the existence of the 'defend the people' *value* will be displayed implicitly within the analysis of the debates and transformation that occurred between 1983 and 1989.

A powerful stream of thought within the Party since the mid-1970s had been the radical-Bennite view that the direct action strategy (see chapter one) was the most effective way of fulfilling this 'defend the people' *value*. However, the collapse of the Miners' Strike started a process of disarticulation of the direct action strategy from the *value*. While the rates rebellion

and ultimately the Liverpool-Militant affair not only enhanced this disarticulation but also started a re-articulation of the 'defend the people' *value* to Kinnock's own preferred approach of active vote maximisation.

This process began on 5th and 6th March 1984 when the Yorkshire and Scottish NUM Executives called for strike action in their areas in response to Government plans to step-up a pit closure plan (The Guardian, 7 March 1984; The Times, 6 & 7 March 1984) . Two days later the NUM National Executive gave the cue for an all-out nation-wide strike by backing the two regional executives and calling for other regions to join the dispute. Despite South Wales, Cumbria, Midlands and other regions voting against the strike (The Guardian, 16 March 1984, 17 March 1984; The Times, 16 March 1984) mass picketing had closed the greatest majority of pits by the last week of March after regional and national union leaders called on their members not to cross picket lines (The Times, 23 March 1984). However, backed by an High Court ban on secondary picketing, the police embarked on a year long campaign of aggressive attacks on picket-lines and a deliberate policy of escorting those who wished to work into the mines whatever the cost in terms of public order and injury. By the end of the month, the strike was well underway with most pits closed and transport, rail, shipping and steel union leaderships planning to block all movements of coal (The Guardian, 30 March 1984; The Times, 30 March 1984).

It is an indication of the strength of commitment to the 'defend the people' *value* that the miners battle to protect their jobs, families and communities from the Government's closure plan inspired such a huge response of solidarity and sympathy from Labour members whatever their broader political views.

Ken Hulme, a member of the LCC and its Organisation Secretary in the late eighties, expressed the feeling for the miners in a way that recalls Drucker's comments about ethos arising directly out of the experiences of the working class (Drucker 1979: 21-22):

... there was a tremendous wave of emotion - you got people (supporting the miners) who were not by any means raving headbangers ... it certainly got me, for example ... it really was a cultural thing - somebody coming from a working-class background, having gone to a secondary modern, there was just this complete identification with what the mining communities were actually saying, a tremendous emotional involvement - I felt it, others did as well (Interview with Hulme 1994).

As a result, many members were involved in some aspect of solidarity work such as fund-raising, producing posters and leaflets and organising speaking tours (Interviews with the following: Gilby 1994; Hulme 1994; Matheson 1994; Mortimer 1994). The NEC also voiced its constant support for the strike, passing a monthly resolution giving unqualified backing to the NUM. Most dramatically, the April NEC unanimously called on CLPs to raise 50p a week from each member for the strike fund (NEC 8, 25 April 1984: 5).

Although close to retirement, Jim Mortimer, the Party General Secretary, tirelessly toured the country speaking for the miners at numerous meetings:

It is, without doubt, the most uplifting experience I had whilst I was at Walworth Road and one of the most uplifting experiences of my whole

life. The response was beyond words. If you ever need proof that this sleeping giant could come to life it was in the Miners' Strike. I remember speaking at packed meetings in the heart of Tory constituencies; going to Labour Parties and finding that they were organising all sorts of events for the miners, collections outside big supermarkets and everywhere people saying what a good response there was (Interview with Mortimer 1994).

Bill Gilby, a member of the Executive of the Scottish Party and Chair of the LCC in the mid-eighties, remembers a similar level of support with his local Labour Party playing a particularly important role by using a printing press they had purchased to produce leaflets and posters in support of the strike for the whole of the East Central region of Scotland (Interview with Gilby 1994). Another activist in Tooting remembers Labour Party members collecting food and money "week after week after week" (Interview with Matheson 1994).

However, this strong, emotional support for the defence of the mining communities was tempered for many in the Party by doubts about the way in which the strike was being led.

Rather romantically, Heffernan and Marqusee see these doubts as afflicting only the higher echelons of the Party causing a division "between the entire base of the movement on the one hand and a small leadership clique on the other" (1992: 49) with the former providing unqualified support while the latter evolved from equivocation to outright treachery.

Such an analysis, however, is not even applicable to the NUM let alone the Party. As was mentioned in chapter four, Scargill-loyalist Peter Heathfield had only just seen off a very

strong challenge by the moderate John Walsh for the post of General Secretary. As was to prove important during the strike, Walsh had called not only for "negotiation not confrontation" but also for a national ballot before any further industrial action was considered (The Guardian, 25 January 1984; The Times, 23 January 1984). The strike call had also been preceded by three strike ballots since 1982 all of which had been defeated (The Guardian, 9 January 1984; The Times, 4 January 1984).

Within the Party itself there was a genuine fear that Scargill's failure to call a national ballot was not only undemocratic and regarded by many members of the public as a sign of the autocracy of the trade union movement but that it was a tactical error that gave the media and the Government their most effective propaganda coup before the strike was really underway. Indeed a consistent feature of the strike was the extremely hostile media response. The failure to call a national ballot, violence on picket lines, secondary picketing and the apparent split in the NUM became the topics that pre-occupied the media and thus made the strike evermore complex and difficult to pursue successfully (Campbell 1985). Important causes and problems of the strike - a planned assault by the right on the miners as potent symbols and militant cadres of the labour movement, and the confused responses of threatened communities caught between the fear of growing dole queues, a union leadership demanding uncompromising direct action, and the promise of generous redundancy payments - were barely given any consideration by the media.

More fundamentally it was also felt that the holding of a national ballot, which many believed would have opted for strike action, could have united the miners; whilst failure to hold one only exacerbated the splits by angering those miners who wanted to work but felt they were being forced into a strike by undemocratic means (Interviews with the following: Gilby 1994;



Hulme 1994; Matheson 1994). These doubts were accentuated by the establishment of the National Working Miners Committee which opposed the strike - largely on the grounds that it was called without a ballot and was based upon the undemocratic tactic of mass picketing - and drew much of its support from the Nottinghamshire pits (The Guardian, 18 August 1984; The Times, 18 August 1984). The Committee formed the base for the Union of Democratic Mineworkers which broke away from the NUM after the strike.

As Ken Hulme commented, there was a "gut-sense" in his constituency that Scargill's approach was "strategically wrong" and that many members were supporting the miners despite Scargill not because of him (Interview with Hulme 1994).

Heffernan and Marqusee are right that "those who wished to see the miners defeated hammered away at the union's refusal to hold a national ballot" (1992: 51) but this is hardly the whole story. Many in the Party, from grassroots through to the leadership, were increasingly disillusioned with the strike not just because the failure to hold a ballot was undemocratic but also because it increased the chances that Thatcher would win this most vital battle in her crusade against the labour movement by detrimentally affecting public support for the miners and splitting the NUM.

However, while the Strike was underway doubts about its leadership were usually expressed in private due to the strong sense of the need to maintain solidarity in the face of extreme hostility from the Government and the media (Interview with Matheson 1994). But as it became clear towards the end of 1984 that the Strike was likely to be lost and as more and more strikers returned to work, the criticism of the NUM leadership came out into the open. The ambivalent feelings towards the strike are most clearly expressed by the interventions of

the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and Tribune newspaper. Both of these organisations were associated with the radical wing of the party in the early eighties and both gave firm support to the strike. In no sense did either the LCC or Tribune attack the NUM with the glee of a new 'right-wing' convert. Both presented balanced and, to an extent mournful, assessments.

In the Spring of 1985, the LCC published a document that proved a popular summing-up for many of the ambiguous feelings about the Strike. It attacked the NUM leadership for failing to hold a ballot, for failing to convince all of its members that strike action was necessary, for refusing to condemn the more extreme violence and intimidation perpetrated by some strikers, for the defensive nature of the union leadership's arguments about the future of the industry, and finally for Scargill's tendency to deteriorate into hollow rhetoric (LCC 1985: 2-3). While Nigel Williamson, in his 1985 New Year editorial for Tribune - which was to become one of the key documents of the 'realignment' (as the contingent political aspect of the transformation was being called at this time) - attacked the radical wing of the Party arguing that

Calls for a general strike, if not irresponsible, are at best a distraction from the real issues for it is not a demand that has any basis in reality. It cannot be delivered and there are those who, knowing that, raise the demand only to be able to cry "betrayal" when it does not happen (Williamson 1985).

This troubled sense began the dislocation of the 'defend the people' *value* from the direct action strategy. For it was the strength of commitment to the miners cause that encouraged many to rethink the strategy adopted by Scargill and supported by Benn: if the strategy was

seen to fail in achieving the goal of defending the people then contemplation of a new approach became a sign of commitment to that goal rather than retreat from it. The condemnation of the direct action strategy that followed the Strike arose not out of a sudden rush for votes or careers, as is implied by Heffernan and Marqusee and by the cries of "sell-out" uttered by the radical wing, but the result of a deep disappointment in defeat. This can be seen particularly by the fact, ignored by the radical wing, that those leading the rethink were often equally critical of Kinnock and the moderates in the Party for failing to adequately defend the miners.

This criticism focused on the fact that Kinnock's own response had been uncertain and faltering. By mid-April the leader was increasingly arguing that a ballot should have been used and issued ever more confident denunciations of picket-line violence whilst also affirming his support for the strike in the evasive sense that he supported the miners' case i.e. their arguments about threatened communities and the economic value of keeping pits open (LCC 1985: 3; The Times, 26 June 1984; The Times, 1 October 1984; ). This strategy was also bolstered by the attempts of Stan Orme, the Shadow Energy Spokesman, to act as a peace-broker between the NUM and the NCB by hawking a series of compromise plans.

Criticism of Kinnock's ambiguity was vocal. He faced attack from Tribune and conflict in the PLP over his refusal to accept NUM invitations to speak at a series of rallies or appear on a picket line (The Guardian, 8 November 1984; The Times, 8 November 1984; Tribune, 23 November 1984). Not until 30 November when the strike was past its peak did Kinnock appear on a platform with Scargill at a rally for the miners. And it was only when the strike was in its final days that the Leader first stood on a carefully-chosen, peaceful picket line in Islwyn (The Times, 4 January 1985). Kinnock also faced derision after stating during a trip to

the Soviet Union that the Soviet press had overstated the deprivation of the mining communities and that most in Britain were appalled by the violence of the pickets (The Guardian, 24 November 1984; The Times, 24 November 1984).

In his Working To Win editorial, quoted above, Williamson responded to Kinnock's behaviour:

The so-called "new realism" which sought to minimise the importance of collective action has done us no favours. Many of its foremost proponents have disgracefully made little or no effort to put the miners' case to their members. ... Neil Kinnock may have only himself to blame for some of his difficulties. He should not have allowed his reservations about the conduct of the dispute to obscure his commitment to the strikers' cause (Williamson 1985).

Similarly, the LCC reflected the views of many members criticising what it regarded as an utterly inadequate response by the leadership:

... the Parliamentary leadership acted as if supporting the *case* (for the miners and for coal -AL) could in some way be separated from the process of struggle - warts and all. ... The results of the leadership distancing itself from the daily work of the dispute, combined with errors by the NUM, allowed the Tories to set the agenda and put Labour on the defensive ... Labour spent more time stating what they did not support rather than positively setting an alternative agenda. ...

Giving ground to the Tories in a vain hope of attracting the middle ground can only appear to the public for what it is - equivocation and crisis management (LCC 1985: 3).

Another influential contribution to the 'realignment' process, as it was being called at the time, also recognised that the strike was constructing a genuine 'soft left' stream which was neither of the radical nor the moderate wings. Patrick Seyd's New Socialist Article, 'Bennism Without Benn', acknowledged that many, once on the Bennite wing, were now critical of the way Benn had unconditionally supported Scargill. But it equally recognised that

Few of the new left are happy with Kinnock's performance over a wide range of issues but especially over the Miners' Strike (Seyd 1985).

Seyd went on to state that many on the soft left now hoped to

detach him (Kinnock) from the embrace of the Parliamentary right, and (knew) that to do so they must offer him a more solid base on the left (Seyd 1985).

As such, not only did the Strike provide the event that began the process of dislocation of the direct action strategy from the 'defend the people' *value* but the radicals response of claiming betrayal and sell-out proved a particularly weak tactic, precisely because those who were rethinking strategy felt themselves to be motivated by the strength of their commitment to the miners' cause rather than by a plan to turn their back upon it. In this context it would have made more sense for radicals to argue for alternative strategies that maintained an extra-

parliamentary and grass-roots element but avoided the moralism and hysteria of personal condemnation. Such a strategy, of course, did exist in the form of the mass party approach - unfortunately the radical wing seemed unaware of this and thus allowed even this element of radicalism on the soft left to wither neglected of adequate support from them.

The radical wing, along with most analysts of the period, similarly failed to notice that the disillusion with the Strike's leadership also extended very widely throughout the trade union movement (Interview with Edmonds 1994). This inevitably gave an enormous boost to the "new realists" whose already well-established claim that the direct action strategy was ineffective was largely proved. As was mentioned in chapter four, these new realists were keen to give Kinnock a free hand in terms of reforming the Party's policy, campaigning structures and certain aspects of its organisation. As such the Strike's collapse enhanced Kinnock's power by providing him with increasingly powerful allies in the unions who were willing to give him the block votes he needed to push reform through conference.

Unlike the radical wing, Kinnock seemed aware of the *value* that was motivating a rethink. Prior to his more famous use of the dislocation between the 'defend the people' *value* and the direct action strategy in his 1985 conference speech with regards to Militant (see below), he took a similar approach to the Miners' Strike, commenting in his 1984 conference speech that:

The People who need the support and safe-guard of trade unionism and of public services, cannot afford to be part of any political 'charge of the Light Brigade'. There is no glory in defeat for them; there is nothing but extra miserable burdens of insecurity and insufficiency. In those

circumstances, it is they - the poorest, the weakest and the most needy  
- who are the martyrs (Labour Party 1984b: 103).

Kinnock saw clearly that he could stir antipathy to the direct action strategy by claiming that the strategy betrayed the defence of the people. But while the Strike had begun this process of disarticulation upon which Kinnock capitalised, it was the rates rebellion that deepened this disarticulation and took it further by starting a process of re-articulating the 'defend the people' *value* to Kinnock's active version of the vote maximisation *value*. It should also be restated here that this approach contrasts with the existing literature on this period. Previous analyses have tended to play down the importance of this period for the transformation while also avoiding any actual detailed analysis of the disputes of 1984 and 1985 (the only exception to this being Heffernan and Marqusee, 1991 but they take a particularly simplified approach as outlined above). Taking a more complex approach encourages us to see the origins of transformation at all points and in many different processes, hence we can identify vital causes occurring during this period and in forms, such as the articulation of *values*, not previously observed.

The issue of the rates became a source of dispute and transformation in the Party when the Government pledged itself to introduce strict controls over the financial commitments of "high-spending" councils, predominantly Labour-run, by introducing legislation allowing the Secretary of State for the Environment to set a ceiling for the rates of individual councils - before their 1985/1986 budgets were agreed. The legislation allowed the Government to impose penalties if the caps were disobeyed by withdrawing large sums from central

government grants to local authorities. This move coincided with battles inside and outside Parliament over the planned abolition of six Metropolitan County Councils and the Greater London Council.

The first council to take an early, forthright stand against the Tory plans was Liverpool City Council. While Labour had reached its June '83 electoral nadir in most of the rest of England, Liverpool was recording increasing support for the defeated Party. Not only did the voters of this city, which faced the most devastating effects of Thatcherite policies, provide Labour with a 2.4% swing in its favour in the General Election but they had already given the local Party a majority on the City Council for the first time in ten years a few weeks before (Crick 1986: 215). But Liverpool was to be ruled by no ordinary Labour Party. The Labour Group elected in the local elections was dominated by supporters of the Militant newspaper and members of its associated Trotskyist group, the Revolutionary Socialist League. Furthermore it had now come to power on a manifesto promising an ambitious programme of reconstruction and inevitably high-spending (Crick 1986: 236) in a period when the Government had planned to destroy such politics for good.

The council decided to defy the Government and the law by adopting the protest tactic of setting an unbalanced budget which would maintain spending commitments while failing to raise rates (The Times, 25 January 1984). Kinnock responded by unequivocally condemning the council's plans. The NEC backed the leader's stance passing a motion opposing illegal opposition to the rate-cap although, rather ambiguously, it simultaneously accepted that such opposition was in the spirit of conference policy (NEC 9, 9 May 1984: 4-5).



However, events seemed to show that Kinnock was out of line with much of his Party when councils facing rate-capping and abolition agreed, at a conference of local authorities in Labour's flagship City of Sheffield, to adopt a tactic of non-compliance with Government restrictions (The Guardian, 7 July 1984; The Times, 7 July 1984). Local polls throughout the country boosted the councils' stand, regularly showing majority opposition to rate-capping and abolition (Fielding & Seyd 1984).

A bigger boost came when the 1984 Conference voted on a show of hands (Labour Party 1984b: 142) to support councils "forced to break the law" (Labour Party 1984b: 130) despite the fact that the NEC had recommended that the motion be remitted. These events seemed to show clearly that many activists in the Party, in late 1984, were still attached to the articulation between the 'defend the people' *value* and the direct action strategy,

However, Kinnock continued to oppose the illegal stance maintaining the line he had established at the Local Government Conference of 1984, when he used the slogan "better a dented shield than no shield at all" (Interview with Clarke 1994). This stance was summarised in an NEC motion backing Kinnock which stated that

... it is essential for Labour councillors to retain their powers in order to give maximum protection for local services and for those who work in them (NEC 10, 26 June 1985: 4).

The "dented shield" strategy allowed a certain articulation between Kinnock's own opposition to non-compliance and the 'defend the people' *value* by implying that since a likely response to non-compliance was the disqualification of councillors and the appointment of government

commissioners, then the radical strategy, in the medium-term, would only leave the vulnerable open to total attack; better that councillors stayed in control and did what they could to ameliorate the ill-effects of rate-capping by legal means. The 'dented shield' approach had an unmistakably provisional feel to it. A sense that councillors would use that 'dented shield' as an alternative to non-compliance until some other source of aid arrived. This other source of aid was bluntly identified by one councillor when he stated:

The only way out of this is to return a Labour government (quoted in Smith & When 1985).

This, of course, meant that if the "dented shield" approach was accepted it would also imply an articulation of the 'defend the people' *value* to active vote maximisation if Labour were to be re-elected.

Kinnock's articulation gained a greater resonance amongst the rates rebels as it became clearer that the Government had no intention of backing-down. The higher the possibility of disqualification and the appointment of commissioners, so the direct action approach of non-compliance seemed less valid as an attempt to defend the people and the more Kinnock's line became appealing.

In addition to the Government's intransigence was the fact that Liverpool's situation was to an extent unique. Other councils did not possess the degree of radical unity within the Labour Group that Liverpool enjoyed and they certainly did not receive the union backing that Hatton's rebels had won aided by Militant activists in the unions themselves. Many councils

threatened with rate-capping were actually involved in troubled industrial disputes with their trades unions and, in some cases such as Hackney, with their tenants' groups (Wolmar 1984).

These problems combined with threats of legal action from a Government increasingly free of its more important battle with the miners, and lobbying by those who had always favoured other tactics led to the increasing popularity of the tactic of postponing setting a rate until the Government agreed to negotiate over a series of grievances caused by rate-capping. This contrasted with the original non-compliance strategy of refusing to set any rate until the Government completely abandoned its policy. The new tactic also appealed as a way of maintaining unity amongst rebel councils; there had already been widespread rumours that Lewisham had been considering derogation (The New Statesman, 12 October 1984) - the process whereby a rate-capped council could re-negotiate a rate with the Government, supposedly satisfactory to both. Of course, if any authority opted for derogation it would provide the Government with a powerful propaganda weapon enabling them to portray resistant councils as unreasonable.

Kinnock's stance began to gain gradual ground. As both cause and effect of the weakening of the rebellion, a soft left response developed between the non-compliance strategy and the 'dented shield' approach which was not dissimilar to that which emerged after the Miners' Strike and which criticised both Kinnock and Scargill. This approach maintained the confrontational, campaigning *value* of non-compliance but articulated it with the pragmatism of the 'dented shield'. It took the form of a recognition that non-compliance was either, at best, only one possible strategy and, at worst, a form of political suicide. Instead, it was felt that what was needed was a buoyant popular campaign that drew imaginatively on the goodwill of many rate-payers to force the Government to change course. In many ways it bore a

close resemblance to, and was no doubt in part inspired by, the popular and broad-based opposition proposed by the mass party approach. Frances Morrell and Steve Bundred, both members of the rate-capped ILEA, wrote that

non-compliance alone is an incomplete, and ultimately an inadequate strategy. If such an action is elevated into an end in itself, we will shift the focus of debate onto ground of Mrs Thatcher's own choosing. ... Most of us when we think of campaigning, naturally think in terms of a strike or industrial action. But a campaign to defend public services needs to be tactically distinguished from a campaign to defend an industry. ... What follows from this perception is a new kind of mass campaigning by both Labour councils and Labour opposition groups. ... This campaign should aim to mobilise active popular support against government plans, as Liverpool has done, as (in different ways) the Greater London Council and ILEA have done, and as non-party organisations like CND have done (Morrell & Bundred 1984).

While Stuart Weir, a Labour Party journalist and activist increasingly helping to shape the soft left approach, wrote that

the kind of vigorous and imaginative campaign which is within our power could possibly stop the rate-capping proposals; and at least it should seriously damage and discredit a government which is very vulnerable on issues of local democracy (Weir 1984).

But Weir went on to argue that such a campaign could not mean non-compliance as the conditions of a solid backing by the council's unions, workforce and electors did not exist outside of Liverpool. As a result, in a telling comment that specifically evoked the emotion attached to the defend the people issue alongside the more rational question of an articulated strategy, he stated:

Why ... should the defiant Labour groups which are most likely to contemplate direct action put at risk, at this stage of the game, all they have fought to protect. ... My heart is with the Liverpool councillors. But my head tells me direct action should be a last resort, not the first (Weir 1984).

The problems and doubts about non-compliance had their effect. On the 7th January, the Local Government Committee explicitly called on councils to renegotiate rather than directly confront the Government when it came to the setting of their budgets in March (The Times, 8 January 1985). Although Liverpool and some London councils decided to continue with non-compliance, the request persuaded most councils to opt for renegotiation. Most significantly, the GLC - the council that had done most to make the mass party approach a reality, and had presented an alternative focus for those on the left who found certain aspects of the Militant group in Liverpool less than attractive - opted to set a legal budget (The Guardian, 11 March 1985; The Times, 11 March 1985). More significantly still, the GLC vote in favour of the legal budget was supported by Ken Livingstone, the new hero of the radical wing and emerging soft left.

The collapse of the unified rates rebellion was both cause and effect of the continuing dislocation of the direct action strategy from the 'defend the people' *value*. Unlike the Miners' Strike, the rebellion had been more explicitly and significantly about *strategies* which could fulfil that *value*. Also, unlike the Strike, the rates rebellion debate had been less muted during the actual dispute itself. Kinnock, for example, had felt able to take a clearer and firmer line on the issue. These characteristics of the rates rebellion were no doubt in part caused by the emerging dislocation resulting from the strike. But the rebellion's characteristics also exacerbated this dislocation - a clear process of inter-retroaction.

However, with only Liverpool and Lambeth councils left to fight on with the old rates rebellion tactic, the issue became inseparable from the role of Militant which immediately provided the inter-retroactive context within which a whole variety of other issues were to be complexly linked to the transformation of this particular *value*.

Liverpool finally set a rate in mid-June, however it was not high enough to cover the spending commitments outlined in the budget. It was hoped that by doing this that some of the legal heat would be taken off of the council while the campaigning stand would be maintained. The leaders announced that the City would run out of money by the end of the year. Hatton and his comrades were gambling that as Liverpool headed ever closer towards total chaos the Government would be forced to step in and hand yet another propaganda coup to the council (Crick 1986: 260). The precedent, of course, existed in the form of Patrick Jenkin's aid deal but this was a government no longer troubled by the Miners' Strike or facing a united front from the local authorities.

Therefore, in order to up the stakes - and possibly because of advice they received that it was a legal requirement (Crick 1986: 260) - the Liverpool leaders decided to issue 31,000 redundancy notices to its workforce on 5th September. The move, they stressed was technical and tactical and that all those receiving the notices would not actually face redundancy and would be re-employed after a ninety day period. But the leaders had seriously misjudged the effect that the move would have on its own workforce and throughout the labour movement and the country. Many council employees reacted with horror and the previously unified union support for the council's stand fractured. The NUT and the head teachers union tried to stop the redundancies in court and NALGO picketed council meetings whilst refusing to deliver the notices. This latter refusal meant that GMBATU shop stewards, who supported the move, had to take taxis around the City delivering the notices themselves. The collapse of support for the council leadership was unequivocally confirmed when a planned strike against Government policies was abandoned after the NUT, NUPE and NALGO voted against industrial action (The Guardian, 21 September 1985; 25 September 1985; The Times, 21 September 1985; 25 September 1985).

Despite an NEC meeting which carried a motion backing the "courage and determination" of the council by just one vote (NEC mins., 25 September 1985: 5) in the lead-up to conference the leader displayed that he sensed the Liverpool Militants had made their most serious mistake by confidently stating on TV-AM that he wanted a purge of Militant in Liverpool but that to do so required proof of membership and a new machinery to carry out investigations and expulsions (The Guardian, 30 September 1985; The Times, 30 September 1985).

The predicted showdown with Militant at the Conference in October exceeded anyone's expectations. In his leadership address - a speech which more than any other, came to symbolise the transformation of the 1980s - Kinnock appealed directly to the dislocation that was occurring between the direct action strategy and the 'defend the people' *value*. He stated:

... implausible promises don't win victories. I'll tell you what happens with impossible promises. You start with far-fetched resolutions. They are then pickled into a rigid dogma ... and you end in the grotesque chaos of a Labour council hiring taxis to scuttle round a city handing out redundancy notices to its own workers (applause). I am telling you, you can't play politics with peoples' jobs and with people's services or with their homes (applause and some boos). The people will not, cannot abide posturing ... We have got to win. Not for our sakes, but really, truly, to deliver the British people from evil. Let's do it. (Labour Party 1985b: 128-129).

The enormous effect this speech had upon the delegates at the conference was a confirmation of the dislocation of the direct action strategy from the 'defend the people' *value*. It was also a sign of the gradual acceptance of the active vote-maximisation *value* as an alternative strategy for the defence of the people. Because of this disarticulation and re-articulation, the existence of a new strand in the Party was confirmed - the soft left. Bryan Gould, who was rapidly becoming a highly influential thinker for this strand, summed-up feelings about these changes in *value* when he stated:



... by appearing to abandon any real contention for parliamentary power, Labour not only concedes the next - and every successive - general election; we also give up the only weapon which could be used, in the lifetime of this Parliament to defend our people. The one constraint which would force Mrs. Thatcher to moderate her policies would be the fear that Labour looked likely to win the next general election (Gould 1985a).

The development of this soft left was one of the most significant factors of the transformation. However to explain fully the influence - on the soft left and the Party as a whole - of the Militant debacle and the 1985 speech as factors within a complex inter-retroactive context, we must first study more fully the origins of this soft left and then return to the Liverpool Militants and the 1985 conference in relation to this other causal line.

## **THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SOFT LEFT: DIVERSITY AND MULTIPLICITY**

Despite the powerful effect of Kinnock's 1985 conference speech, the soft left did not develop out of a cathartic moment following the collapse of the strike and the rates rebellion. The process was gradual, drawing upon a variety of events and streams of thought within the soft left itself. In effect, this and further sections (see chapter 8), will show how the soft left was never one cohesive body possessing a shared outlook and a high capacity for common action.

We can see this gradualism and complexity most clearly when we study the origins of the most organised section of the soft left - the LCC. Like the soft left, the LCC has been

portrayed as a group of activists that played a central role on the radical wing of the Party in the late seventies and early eighties but then - rapidly disillusioned by the failures of the mid-eighties and/or the attraction of power - shifted to a more centrist position losing its activist base, becoming dominated by ambitious careerists who happily played an echo-chamber role for Neil Kinnock. This interpretation has been most firmly developed by Heffernan and Marqusee (1992: 166-184). However, the origins and development of the LCC attest to a far more subtle and complex history that reflect the subtleties and complexities of the whole soft left phenomena.

Firstly, there are the hybrid origins of the group itself. Founded in 1978 it brought together an interesting mix of Labour figures for its "launch committee" including supporters of Tony Benn such as Francis Cripps and Frances Morrell but also firm non-Bennites such as Bryan Gould and Jeff Rooker (*Labour Activist*, October 1978). The main speakers at its first public meeting at the 1978 conference were Alan Fisher, General Secretary of NUPE, and, surprisingly Peter Shore (Interview with Haworth 1995; Interview with Stanley 1994). Alongside this mix, there was also a group of radical activists, such as Jon Lansman, who were to become close to Benn, but at the time were not part of his network of supporters - this group also included a number of CLPD activists (Interview with Stanley 1994; Interview with Hulme 1994). In addition, in the five years following its establishment, a number of ex-Communist Party members with euro-communist leanings, disillusioned by the internecine warfare that had broken out in that Party, joined Labour and became involved in the LCC (Interview with Haworth 1995; Interview with Hulme 1994). One of those ex-CP members, Ken Hulme, actually went on to become the LCC's Organisation Secretary in the late 1980s and as he has commented, ex-CP members were both anti-Trotskyite and hostile to the direct

action approach of Benn and Scargill having come from a tradition that placed strong emphasis upon alliances and broad fronts to defeat capitalism (Interview with Hulme 1994).

Furthermore, the LCC from its earliest days, developed ideologically out of an articulation between two separate political traditions. The first was a commitment to the traditional principles of a radical Labour socialism, which displayed itself in support for the Alternative Economic Strategy (Labour Activist, February 1980) and Clause Four (Labour Activist, October 1978). The second was an allegiance to the more recent, new agenda issues such as anti-racism and womens rights, which displayed itself in the desire, as expressed in the group's launch statement,

to work closely with and increase the political effectiveness of the various pressure and campaigning groups which now operate alongside and outside the Labour Party. ... They offer so much to the Party, particularly if their initiatives could be co-ordinated in a joint programme (Labour Activist, October 1978).

This dual commitment to Labour's traditions in the form of Clause Four and to working with and co-ordinating the new pressure groups were, in fact, enshrined in the 'Objects' of the LCC's constitution (LCC Constitution 1983).

In addition to this, many of those involved in the LCC in its early days were usually not only active in Labour but also in broader bodies which operated outside the Party. Groups such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Institute for Workers Control, Labour Action for Peace, the Socialist Health Association, and the Socialist Educational Association. This

overlap of personnel between Labour members and pressure group members further enhanced the new agenda aspect of the LCC. As Alan Haworth has commented:

If you were a self-respecting Labour activist in the late 70's you didn't restrict yourself to one particular group, you sought to embrace the lot. If you saw people's CVs when they were seeking parliamentary candidacies and the like, it was de rigeur to be a member of everything from Anti-Apartheid to Amnesty International (Interview with Haworth 1995).

So despite the claim by a Solidarity Group publication that the LCC was "believed to be the brain-child of Tony Benn" (Labour Solidarity, May 1981), the group was in truth always much more than just a support network for the leading figure of the Labour left. Nigel Stanley, the group's Organisation Secretary in the early 1980s, has described the LCC as

initially a rather broad, vaguely left Fabian Society. ... It was a fairly rich tapestry of people and because it didn't have, and on the whole, resisted infiltration by disciplined Trotskyist groups, it developed away from being a terribly clear faction with a very clear series of demands, it was a richer organisation. Various people came in and left at various stages but it was always a coalition of different forces and individuals and approaches (Interview with Stanley 1994).

Consequently, even within the LCC, the organised heart of what was to become the 'soft left', there was no point in its history when it was peopled by individuals motivated primarily by a

desire to see Tony Benn crowned leader. The group drew in far more diverse strands and articulated issues and strategies that could not be reduced to one particular goal. As such the LCC's input into the realignment was more complex than as a body that defected in whole or part from the Benn wing. Many LCC members had begun to inhabit a new space between the radical and the moderate wings before 1985. In particular this can be seen by the fact that, despite the group's support for Tony Benn's deputy leadership bid in 1981, the issue had seriously divided the LCC. In addition, as was pointed out in chapter four, there were already people on the executive who were arguing for OMOV, a reform that was vehemently opposed by many of Benn's supporters (Interview with Stanley 1994).

As such, the defeat of the miners and the rates rebels allowed these different trends within the LCC and the soft left as a whole, to become more pertinent, either weakening the belief various individuals on the soft left had in the direct action strategy or weakening the position of those within the soft left who still supported direct action. In fact, it was at this time that certain members of the LCC Executive, such as Barry Winter (Winter 1984) and Judy Walker (Walker 1984), resigned over the gradual shift in direction away from the radical strategy. Winter, an active member of the radical-leaning group, Independent Labour Publications, wrote in his resignation letter:

Those who I identify as the current leadership of the LCC ... have a political approach with which I am increasingly at odds. The LCC has been set on a political course that is deeply pragmatic and eclectic for all its talk about campaigning and mass politics (Winter 1984).

However, while the strike and the rates rebellion encouraged such shifts within the soft left, no issue played a bigger role in forging links between the LCC and Kinnock, and simultaneously breaking links between the LCC and the radicals, than the Militant purge. Thus it was within the heat of the Militant battle, with its multiple positioning of various constitutive outsides, that the soft left and the LCC constructed its most cohesive identity.

The LCC In the early eighties was overwhelmingly a grass-roots organisation made-up of Party members active in, and to an extent obsessed by (Interview with Gilby 1994), the minutiae of local parties and local government. In just over a year from its launch, the LCC had already picked-up the support of forty-two CLPs and had 600 members (Labour Activist, February 1980) and this rose steadily to over 900 by 1985 (LCC membership list) with the greatest concentrations being in London, Scotland and, to a lesser degree, the Midlands (LCC Annual Report 1983). It was in the constituencies and boroughs of these areas that LCC supporters, inspired by the radical democratic principles of post-1968 socialism and the new agenda ideals of anti-racism, womens rights and the peace movement, found themselves in opposition to the Militant Tendency, the supporters of which were gaining increasing influence in a number of CLPs throughout the country but were particularly strong in London, Scotland and Liverpool. The tendency preached a brand of workerist politics and Leninist organisation that was anathema to the more libertarian and less orthodox members of the LCC. Peter Hain, who was far from being on the pro-Kinnock stream in the LCC, condemned Militant on the grounds that they were

reactionary on racism, on women's rights, on Ireland and industrial democracy. They are old-fashioned statistes - running the town hall in an elitist fashion and learning nothing from the new tide of democratic

socialism sweeping through local Labour councils like Greater London or Sheffield (Tribune, 13 December 1985).

The local battles the LCC had with Militant are recounted as almost legendary struggles by LCC activists now. The feature that remains most prominent for many of them are the unsubstantiated stories of violence that accompanied the battles and obviously heightened the intensity and hatred between the two groups. There are many anecdotes ranging from threatening behaviour and actual physical assault to the attempted electrocution of anti-Militants at a conference by the wiring-up of a duplicator to the mains (Interviews with the following: Haworth 1995; Hulme 1994; Matheson 1994; Stanley 1994). In Spring of 1984, Democratic Left (the Kinnock-supporting wing of the National Organisation of Labour Students) actually produced a public report blaming Militant for the suspension of the NOLS conference in April following an outbreak of fighting on the conference floor (Democratic Left 1984).

As a result, the majority in the LCC had a very hostile attitude to Militant believing that the entryists were a serious problem to which a solution had to be found (Interviews with the following: Gilby 1994; Haworth 1994; Barron 1994; Hulme 1994). A large number of members, following their harsh experiences in local parties, took a particularly hardline hoping for an all-out attack on the Trotskyite group. This attitude was particularly strong amongst the LCC's most active supporters forming a strong anti-Militant majority on the group's executive. However, within the group there was a broader spectrum of views about the response to Militant alongside those who took the most aggressive hardline. This spectrum was thrown strongly into relief after Kinnock's 1985 conference speech. There were those who wanted to take-on Militant but were wary of throwing in their lot too closely with

Kinnock, as well as those who felt understandably squeamish about a leadership-inspired attack on any section of the Party.

Alan Haworth, a senior figure within the LCC, remembered that

there were certainly leading members of the LCC who had gone on the media and been at least ambivalent, if not codedly critical of Kinnock's attack. ... And I remember how angry some people were about that including me (Interview with Haworth 1995).

While others in the LCC and on the soft left recognised the seriousness of the Militant problem but were shocked by Kinnock's strategy. Alan Matheson, an activist in Tooting CLP, commented on Kinnock's 1985 speech:

I was torn in two by it. I completely agreed with what he was saying, I thought it was brilliant that at last we had a leader who was going to stand up to Militant and tell them where to stuff their redundancy notice by taxi and all the other crap that was getting us into trouble. The way he did it though was appalling, it was as though the new politics was just airy-fairy nonsense that he'd been putting-on and that we were still a Party run by macho men and that the one who could shout the loudest was the one who was going to win. I went to a meeting shortly after organised by the LCC women's group and it just became a mourning session - we felt betrayed and completely knocked-



back that somebody could do the right thing in such an appalling way  
(Interview with Matheson 1994).

However, despite these differences within the LCC, the general sense that Militant must be dealt with in some way was not a view shared throughout the Party. And this opposition had helped provide the soft left and the LCC with a firmer identity in opposition to its detractors. Objections to the soft left view came, to a limited extent, at least initially, from some individuals on the moderate wing but a more robust and active response was launched by the Bennites.

This initial reticence on the part of some moderates was noted by the soft left. Bryan Gould commented that he felt making the Party electable

meant getting rid of what was really a life-threatening condition in the Party due to the entryism of people like Militant and so on. The oddity is that it was people from the soft left like me who saw this most clearly and were prepared to do something about it. Whereas those on the right were cowed by this issue, they complained about it as victims but they didn't see themselves as taking the initiative (Interview with Gould 1994).

Even Kinnock recognised resistance to his plans from the moderates, he comments:

I think there were two reasons (for the moderates' resistance). One is the memory they had of the appalling divisions in the Labour Party in

the 1950s and their memories were scarred by that. ... The second thing is that this is a very liberal and tolerant Party. It doesn't like picking fights especially with youngsters because it thinks people "grow out" of things (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

Ken Hulme, a veteran Militant-fighter, met similar wariness from figures such as Terry Ashton, Diane Hayter and Frank Dobson (Interview with Hulme 1994) who feared that the Party may have looked divided if Militant were challenged. However, this initial wariness probably reflected a certain lack of confidence on the moderate wing of the Party about their ability to withstand a backlash from the left; once the expulsion process was fully underway the moderate wing rallied behind Kinnock and gave their wholehearted support.

However, another side to the argument was provided by many of Tony Benn's supporters who felt a confrontation was engineered by the core leadership to please the moderates and the media and to provide Kinnock with an excuse to destroy the power of the radical wing (Interview with King 1994; Interview with Mullin 1994). Chris Mullin argued that

(Militant) was a tiny little organisation that never was what it was cracked up to be in size or influence (Interview with Mullin 1994).

But there were also those close to the radical wing and active within the Party establishment who shared a view similar to the cautious stance of those on the moderate wing in that they saw Militant as a problem but one that had to be approached gently. Jim Mortimer, for example, stated:

I was in no doubt at all that Militant was in breach of the constitution ... but I shared the view of Ron Heywood that Militant also attracted a lot of younger people who wanted to be militant with a small 'm' ... that in time these people would become normal left-wing members of the Labour Party (Interview with Mortimer 1994).

Even an NEC motion which prevented the expulsion of Brychan Davies, a suspected Militant member from Rhondda, displayed some sympathy for this view stating that

... it was not in the interests of the Party to deal with such an issue (expulsion) on the basis of one young member in one constituency (NEC 3, 28 November 1984: 10).

Thus the conflict with Militant had introduced a plurality of views into the Party which were not congruent with any traditional left-right or radical-moderate spectrum. A classic example, in fact, of complex multiplication. This contrasts with the existing literature and with views common at the time which tended to regard the attack on Militant as developed solely within the core leadership and within the ranks of the moderate wing (Hughes and Wintour 1990: 9-10; Heffernan and Marqusee 1992: 69; 261; Shaw 1994: 35-36).

As such, Kinnock's forthright attack on the Trotskyite group at the 1985 conference was an extremely significant point in the development of the soft left and by implication the broader Party. The speech gave powerful backing to the bellicose stance of the majority of the LCC and its soft left supporters. This vindication boosted the confidence of this group, enhanced its support for Kinnock himself (see below) and, perhaps most significantly, constructed a

moment for the LCC and soft left within which its identity, based as it was both on a confrontation with Militant and those who disapproved of an aggressive attack on that group, was given a concrete reality. They were no longer one loose group with a particular view, they were now, suddenly, the mainstream allied unexpectedly with a leader about whom they previously had held serious reservations. Such a moment clearly defined and confirmed the direction and role of the LCC and the soft left for a considerable time to come.

Unsurprisingly, the LCC leadership opted to give its wholehearted backing to Kinnock. In an editorial entitled "The Blunt Choice!" which appeared on the front-page of the LCC's conference newsletter, it was stated that

Whatever people may feel about Neil Kinnock's Tuesday speech, all the different elements on the left cannot duck deciding whether they are going to 'fight' the leadership along with Militant, or whether they adopt an alternative strategy. Those who decide to 'fight' Kinnock are saying they don't care about winning the next election; they are opting for self-indulgence - the kind of self-indulgence which would be a real betrayal of the working class people we have the privilege and the duty to represent; they will also be quite cynically seeking to recruit for their own sectarian purposes rather than build the Party (Labour Activist, Bournemouth '85 edition: 1).

However, as was mentioned above, the speech suddenly and briefly threw the differences about the response to Militant within the LCC into relief. Alan Haworth, a member of the LCC Executive and an officer of the PLP, commented that "it was a moment to make your

mind up inside the LCC" about where you stood in relation to the future of the Party. A number of LCC activists organised a spontaneous meeting after Kinnock's speech and managed by word of mouth to have every LCC member and activist who was at Bournemouth in attendance:

I remember the meeting itself was very dramatic and on balance was in favour of giving support to Kinnock and his attack on Militant but it wasn't without trauma ... I think it was the only LCC meeting I'd ever been at where feelings ran so high that people were close to tears. In the month after this dramatic event an overwhelming number of LCC members rallied behind Kinnock's attack on Militant (Interview with Haworth 1995).

Other soft left members, outside the LCC, felt Kinnock had finally given a lead to the Party. Maureen O'Mara, a constituency activist and trade union womens officer, not active in the LCC but increasingly disillusioned with the radical wing of the Party, felt

... it was leadership. I thought it was what the leader had to do because when he took on Militant, it meant the rest of us were able to do it. ... He handed it to conference in a split second, it was very brave of him to do it, because if conference had not responded in the way it did, Kinnock would have lost but he suddenly gave people a lot of courage (Interview with O'Mara 1994).

Thus the 1985 conference speech was a significant, rather than a cathartic, moment in what was the gradual development of a soft left identity. Streams of thought unsympathetic to the radical wing, especially its direct action strategy, had always existed as a proto-soft left. Many of those who espoused such streams of thought had found their voice in the heterogeneous mix of the LCC since 1978 - a mix which also included those in full support of the radical wing and its direct action strategy. However, the defeats of Miners' Strike, the rates rebellion and the Liverpool Militant affair which were, by far, the most ambitious applications of the direct action strategy, effectively disarticulated the strategy from the deeply-held 'defend the people' *value*. Due to the way in which these events unfolded and due to the skilful interventions of Kinnock, a re-articulation was also begun by which active vote maximisation was increasingly regarded as the only appropriate method for the fulfilment of the 'defend the people' *value*. The existence of strands within the soft left which were already hostile to direct action and, in particular, to Militant, enhanced the efficacy of the disarticulations and re-articulations and were themselves buoyed by these same processes. This last retroaction reached its high-point with the leader's speech at the 1985 conference.

However, changes in *value* cannot alone explain the importance of this period for the transformation. Modifications of *values* were in a close inter-retroaction with changes in the contingent-political circumstances of the Party.

## THE CONTINGENT POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

As was outlined in chapter three, most analysts of this period identify the key feature of the realignment as the development of an alliance in the NEC, the conference and in the broader Party between the new soft left and the right following the disputes of 1984 and 1985

(Hughes and Wintour 1990: 9; Smith 1992a: 9; Shaw 1988: xi; Shaw 1994: 161-162; Jeffrey 1993: 115 -126).

However, while it is undoubtedly the case that the moderates and members of the soft left did begin to vote along broadly similar lines after 1985, to describe this simply as an 'alliance' between the two streams is misleading and once again evades some of the complexities of the issue.

A straightforward 'alliance' between soft left and moderates was unlikely for three reasons. Firstly, those who were active on the soft left had been involved for many years in a battle with the moderates who dominated so many of Labour's local authorities. Hierarchical, conservative and corporatist, these local authorities were regarded as the opposition by a group like the burgeoning LCC which was committed to democratic and networking ideals.

The battles with this old local Labour establishment were a defining experience for many who were active within the LCC. It showed them a wing of the Party that was unresponsive to the demands not only of the voters but also to the grassroots of the Party itself. Alan Haworth was involved in the famous move in Newham North East Labour Party to deselect Reg Prentice in 1975 - a member of the Labour Cabinet. Haworth acknowledges that this was only a small part of a battle extending over six years to "tackle the more pervasive problem of the right-wing hegemony and the freemasons lodge" on Newham council (Interview with Haworth 1995). Such battles - repeated wherever the LCC was active - threw into relief the strong cultural and social differences between the old moderate wing of the Party and the new soft left. Nigel Stanley explains it as follows:

... there was a generational difference, there were few people ... who were younger than forty who would describe themselves as being on the right. The soft left was interested in what you might call post-60's issues like feminism and anti-racism which the old right didn't really understand. Right-wing trade union chairs saw nothing wrong with calling women 'love' and 'dear' and 'darling' - they weren't being deliberately offensive, they just didn't understand that no-one under forty would ever do that (Interview with Stanley 1994).

In fact the soft left's more intense conflict with Militant developed directly out of the battle with the moderates. As Ken Hulme comments:

A lot of what we objected to about what Militant had done in Liverpool was based on what the right had done in Liverpool. The soft left critique of Militant wasn't just a critique of Militant's politics but their style of action and Tammany Hall politics ... We used to argue that Militant built itself up in Liverpool on the right-wing machine, they were two sides of the same coin and operated in the same direction (Interview with Hulme 1994).

These differences and disputes rankled and remained well into the 1980s and although specific policy differences lessened, the personal, social and cultural distinctions still acted as a barrier to the formation of any alliance. Even as late as 1987, antagonistic in-fighting was still being waged between moderates and soft left members (see chapter eight and nine).



Secondly, and more practically, a strict alliance could not be forged for the simple reason that the conditions and facilities necessary for the negotiation of such a pact did not exist. While similar voting patterns could be established on the NEC, this could not ensure power for Kinnock, since NEC decisions only had weight if upheld by the trade unions and not challenged in the wider Party and at conference. But the moderates held no real position of influence within the CLPs and had only limited influence in the trade unions - all the big block votes were in the hands of soft left leaning leaders such as Todd and Edmonds. As such it was the soft left alone which played a much more important role in bringing unions and Party behind Kinnock - an alliance with the moderates in this broader context was not even worth considering. As Nigel Stanley stated:

One of the problems was "who are the right?". The right were a series of vested interests and individuals with entrenched positions of power. ... Solidarity (had) wound down, it was very hard finding any evidence of Solidarity in the constituencies - it had a network of right-wing trade unionists but it wasn't a constituency based pressure group. ... So the soft left couldn't go to, even if it wanted to, the central committee of the right and have an argument with it (Interview with Stanley 1994).

Thirdly, leaving aside the fact that on some fundamental policies, especially unilateralism, the moderates and soft left supporters remained at odds in 1985, there was still one major factor that distinguished them from one another - Militant. As was mentioned above while the soft left, especially those in the LCC were very keen for an all-out showdown with Militant, some moderates were extremely wary.

In truth, the contingent political situation to which the 1984-1985 period gave rise was not a direct alliance between moderates and soft left but a more complex dual informal association between soft left and core leadership and between moderates and core leadership. This is important, firstly, because it highlights that the existing analysis is a simplification and, secondly, because it means that as we trace events as they develop through the 1980s, our attention is now drawn to a series of contingent political dynamics that have tended to be ignored. These dynamics are: the highly antagonistic relationship between soft left and moderates; the troubled and variable association between the core leadership and the moderates; and the troubled and variable association between the core leadership and the soft left. Recognition of these dynamics allows us to notice and explain tensions and events that have otherwise been overlooked. Most specifically it highlights Kinnock's own ambiguous position within the Party and also explains the importance of the months following the 1987 election when the dual association came close to collapse and the leader almost faced a serious challenge to his position. This is dealt with in more detail in chapters eight and nine.

The lack of any genuine alliance between soft left and moderates also extends the category of causes we can bring into our explanation of the transformation. The consequence of the notion that such an alliance existed, and was central to the ability of Kinnock to achieve change, is to shift the spatial focus towards personal causes. In Hughes and Wintour (1990) and Heffernan and Marqusee (1992), the alliance thesis suggests that transformation was the result of conscious and rational decisions by leadership figures who personally constructed a contingent-political situation favourable to change. However, as the preceding and following analysis shows, there were a wide variety of other factors involved in the gradual transformation of the Party which were institutional and ideological in form as well as personal and contingent-political. In addition, the inter-retroaction that is implicit to this thesis

suggests that one form of cause does not precede another. In the alliance thesis, any ideological or institutional changes are regarded largely as the effects of the personal and contingent-political causes. In Hughes and Wintour, in particular, the personal even seems to precede the contingent-political. However, the analysis that has already been developed in this thesis hopefully has displayed that all these factors are inseparably woven together and that any attempt to identify one factor as preceding another will fail since one can certainly find an example in which the secondary factor preceded the primary at some point. In this sense the rejection of the more straightforward alliance thesis allows for study of the *Party's* transformation as a whole rather than a study of how the leadership's transformation occurred and acted as a (literal) precedent affecting the broader Party. Such a rejection is clearly a necessary precondition to avoid an epiphenomenal analysis and thus to produce the complex analysis proposed in chapters one and two. Furthermore, the identification of a dual association rather than a single alliance is clearly a multiplication of the positions (in this case contingent political positions) held within the Party - a factor which is itself a contribution towards enhanced complexity.

## **KINNOCK ESTABLISHED AS LEADER**

A further outcome of the 1984-1985 disputes was the establishment of Kinnock as a leader with a definite identity as a forthright reformer who was, at least for the present, unchallengable. Changes to *values*, in ways favoured by Kinnock, a more secure political balance on the NEC, and a serious decline in the credibility of Kinnock's most vociferous opponents - the radical wing - all contributed to this. But it was the specific decision to

challenge Militant in such a public and aggressive manner at the 1985 conference that confirmed this identity.

As was indicated above, his speech aroused strong feelings of support for Kinnock amongst many on the conference floor. Kevin Barron, who resigned from the Campaign Group soon after the conference, felt the leader was "courageous because he dared to say things that others wouldn't" (Interview with Barron 1994). While John Edmonds commented:

I think (the 1985 speech) united the Party and made many of the divisions on that side of the Party ... appear irrelevant ... Kinnock put himself in charge of the rest against Militant and their supporters and that's what created unity (Interview with Edmonds 1994).

In this sense the 1985 speech was an interesting aspect of a negative identity construction. While many in the soft left stream had already positioned Militant as a constitutive outside during the early 1980s, Kinnock, by acknowledging openly that the Trotskyite group was an enemy, allied himself very effectively with the soft left without directly endorsing their views and identity and without coming to any formal agreement with them.

It also seems that to a certain extent the declaration of war on Militant was a turning-point for Kinnock himself. It was the first time he felt able to express his wholehearted opposition to the tendency at conference. His election in 1983 and the strike in 1984 had prevented him doing this previously. It was also the first real opportunity he had to put his highly aggressive style of leadership into effect and take an unequivocal stance on an issue after the ambiguities

and compromises thrown-up by the Miners' Strike and the rates rebellion. He expressed his uncompromising, and more personally characteristic, attitude to Militant when he commented:

What was different about Militant ... was that they weren't in the business of growing up at all. They were instigated by, organised by, controlled by people who were my age and older, whose intention was full entryism - the use of the mass Party for sectarian ends. So they had to be dealt with. Of course it means doctrinaire division - and that is not the instinct of the Labour Party because they are such a decent bunch of people. So you've got to be a bit of a bastard in order to understand that you are locked in a very fundamental sectarian difference and if you don't win then the Labour Party will change its nature. I was absolutely certain it wasn't going to be allowed to do that (Interview with Kinnock 1994a).

Thus the strengthened role of Kinnock had an energising effect on himself and on many Party members especially those active on the soft left. However, his new-found confidence brought with it a tendency to authoritarianism and intolerance that alienated many, damaged the Party and almost lost him support and his post as leader. This is dealt with more fully in chapter eight.

It should also be mentioned that, as one would expect of an inter-retroactive process, the Militant debacle also had major effects elsewhere throughout the Party. These are detailed and studied in the following chapters of this thesis. In particular, the important influence the

Militant issue had upon the institutional structure of the Party and its increasing centralisation is explored in chapter six.

## CONCLUSION

As with all the other topics covered in this thesis, the events of the 1984-1985 period played a multiple and complex role in the transformation of the Party. Ideological factors and *value* were transformed with new strategies being articulated to the 'defend the people' *value*. Contingent political factors began to undergo major change with the establishment of the dual association between the moderate wing and the core leadership and the soft left stream and the core leadership. Personal factors were involved with Kinnock's own identity as a tough, aggressive, reforming leader being well-established following the 1985 conference.

Inter-retroactive dynamics also became integral to these different factors. It is, of course, observable in the negative identity construction that developed during the soft left's battles with the moderate dominance of local authorities and in the same stream's conflict with Militant activity in local politics. However, most significant as has been pointed out, was Kinnock's establishment of a tacit alliance with soft left forces through his very public acknowledgement of Militant as an 'outside'. Of course, this acknowledgement also helped define Kinnock's own identity and self-perceived identity through a process of negative construction. In addition, the intense process of disarticulation and re-articulation of various *values* and strategies that occurred between 1984 and 1985 also imply processes of inter-retroaction.

The 1984 - 1985 was a period in which a large number of additional causal processes involved in the transformation can be identified. It is a period of extreme fecundity in terms of changes in all spheres of the Party and yet the detail of the period has largely been ignored by analysts. If we cease to regard this short period as the "wasted year" and instead recognise the mass of changes that were occurring across the whole Party, we not only explain more about Labour but also greatly enhance the complexity of analysis.